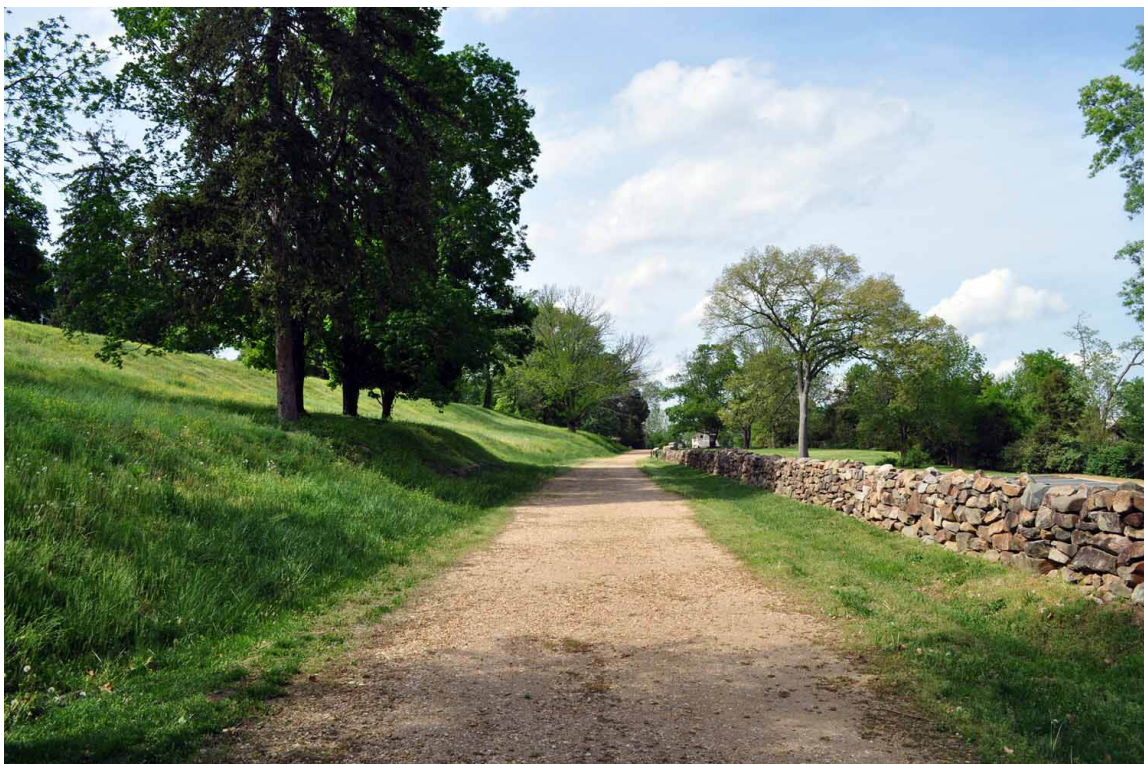


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National Park Service  
Cultural Landscapes Inventory

2011

Revised: 3/2025



Sunken Road Landscape  
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

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## Introduction

### The Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI)

The Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) is a comprehensive inventory of all cultural landscapes in the National Park System. Landscapes that are listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places, or are otherwise managed as cultural resources and in which the National Park Service has, or plans to acquire, legal interest are included in the inventory. The CLI identifies and documents each landscape's location, size, physical development, landscape characteristics, character-defining features, and condition. Cultural landscapes have approved CLIs when concurrence with the findings is obtained from the park superintendent and all required data fields are entered into the Cultural Resources Information System (CRIS-CL) database. In addition, for landscapes not currently listed on the National Register and/or without adequate documentation, concurrence is required from the State Historic Preservation Officer, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, or the Keeper of the National Register.

### Scope of the CLI

The information contained within the CLI is compiled from primary and secondary sources and through on-site surveys of the landscape. The level of investigation is dependent upon scoping the need for information. The baseline information collected provides a comprehensive look at the historical development and significance of the landscape. Documentation and analysis of the existing landscape identifies character-defining characteristics and features and allows for an evaluation of the landscape's integrity and an assessment of the landscape's condition. The CLI also includes historic maps, drawings, and images; photographs of existing conditions; and a site plan that indicates major features. The CLI documents the existing condition of park landscape resources and identifies impacts, threats, and measures to stabilize condition. This information can be used to develop strategies for improved stewardship. Unlike a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR), the CLI does not provide management recommendations or treatment guidelines for the cultural landscape, but it may identify stabilization measures.

### The Cultural Resources Information System (CRIS)

CRIS is the National Park Service's database of cultural resources on its lands, consisting of archeological sites, historic structures, ethnographic resources, and cultural landscapes. Cultural Resources Inventory System (CRIS) replaces three legacy inventory systems: ASMIS (archeology), CLI (cultural landscapes), and LCS (historic structures); and it reinstates the former ERI (ethnographic resources). This Cultural Landscape Inventory document reflects the information in a corresponding CRIS Cultural Landscape record.

### Statutory and Regulatory Foundation

The legislative, regulatory, and policy directives for conducting and maintaining the CLI within CRIS are:

- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (16 USC 470h-2(a)(1)) Sec. 110
- Executive Order 13287: Preserve America, 2003. Sec. 3 (a and c)
- Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Federal Agency Historic Preservation Programs
- Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, 1998. Std. 2
- Cultural Resource Management Guideline, 1997, Release No. 5, page 22; issued pursuant to Director's Order #28 (DO-28)

The NHPA requires the identification, evaluation, and nomination of historic properties to the National Register of Historic Places and the maintenance and expansion of an inventory of cultural resources. DO-28 requires a cyclic assessment of the current condition of cultural landscapes based on an assessment interval, with a default of six years.

### Use

Beyond fulfilling legal and policy requirements, park staff can use the Cultural Landscape Inventory in the following ways:

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- To learn about park cultural landscapes (all staff)
- To inform management decisions (park managers)
- To inform project planning and development (park managers, facility managers, project managers, compliance specialists)
- To monitor the condition of the cultural landscape and take measures to protect its significance and integrity (cultural resource managers, facility managers)
- To recognize the stabilization and treatment needs of landscape features and plan work within cultural landscapes to address the needs (facility managers, cultural resource managers)
- To understand the cultural value of natural systems in a cultural landscape (natural resource managers)
- To create programming and educational materials based on site history (interpretation and education specialists)
- To recognize impacts within cultural landscapes and enforce protection measures (visitor and resources protection staff)

## General Information

### Property Level and CLI Numbers

|                                   |                       |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Inventory Unit Name:</b>       | Sunken Road Landscape |
| <b>Resource Classification:</b>   | Component Landscape   |
| <b>CLI Identification Number:</b> | 300173                |
| <b>Parent Landscape:</b>          | 300149                |
| <b>Inventory Status:</b>          | Complete              |

### Park Information

|                                |                                                        |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Park Name:</b>              | Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park |
| <b>Alpha Code:</b>             | FRSP                                                   |
| <b>Park Organization Code:</b> | 4370                                                   |
| <b>Park District:</b>          | FRSP                                                   |
| <b>Region:</b>                 | Northeast                                              |
| <b>Restricted:</b>             | Yes                                                    |

### Landscape Description:

The Sunken Road landscape, located within the city of Fredericksburg, Virginia, is part of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. The park was established in 1927 to protect and commemorate four major Civil War battlefields fought near Fredericksburg and is a National Register historic district comprised of five discontinuous areas encompassing around 9,429 acres. The 36.6-acre Sunken Road landscape preserves an important portion of the Confederate line from the First Battle of Fredericksburg, where artillery atop Marye's Heights and infantry stationed behind a stone wall along the "sunken road" contributed to perhaps the most lopsided Confederate victory of the war. The site was also the location of fighting during the larger Chancellorsville Campaign. The irregularly-shaped site surrounds three sides of the Fredericksburg National Cemetery, established in 1865, and is roughly bordered on the east by dense residential development, on the north and west by the campus of the University of Mary Washington, and on the south by industrial and commercial development.

The central organizing feature of the landscape is the Sunken Road itself, which runs roughly north-south along a break in slope that represents the physiographic transition between the Virginia Piedmont and the coastal plain. Surrounded by open lawn areas and scattered trees, the road has been rehabilitated to reflect its historic earthen character, and its northern portion still appears sunken in relation to the surrounding landscape. Portions of original stone wall remain alongside the road, and other segments have been reconstructed. East of the road, the Sunken Road landscape includes a portion of the gently-sloped plain which holds one small pre-Civil War home and the sites of two others, as well as several memorial and commemorative features. Also on the road's east side at its southern end is the Fredericksburg Battlefield visitor center, constructed in 1937 and set within a landscape constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps, including a length of reconstructed stone wall. West of the road, the topography rises more steeply up the terraced slope of Willis Hill, where a large post-Civil War house stands near a small family cemetery, which served as a field hospital during the battles. The southwest slope of Willis Hill drops back down into a small valley along the Hazel Run stream, where remnants of a nineteenth-century mill complex used as a Confederate supply depot are located.

### HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

**Pre-Civil War Development (through 1861):**

The Sunken Road landscape is located along a geological transitional zone, which at the time of European contact in the early seventeenth century also constituted an approximate territorial boundary between the major American Indian cultures of north-eastern Virginia. Fredericksburg was established upon the western bank of the Rappahannock River in 1727, on a small portion of a 2000-acre land grant that had been given to John Buckner and Thomas Royston. The remaining Buckner lands were purchased in 1734 by local magistrate Henry Willis, including all but a quarter-acre of the approximately thirty-six acres that comprise the Sunken Road landscape today. The Willis family put most of the property into agricultural production, and what is now called the Sunken Road itself is believed to have originated in an informal track established during the early Willis years. Henry Willis's son Lewis built a domestic complex atop what would become known as Willis Hill around 1780, and in a small valley on the southwest slope the hill established a sandstone quarry. In 1797 Lewis Willis sold a small parcel near the quarry to Fontaine Maury, his neighbor to the north. Maury built a grist mill complex powered by the Hazel Run stream, which he sold a few years later to John Drummond.

In 1817, the Willis family home atop the hill was destroyed by fire and was not rebuilt. Four years later the property was purchased by John Wellford, who is credited with several developments within the Sunken Road landscape, the most significant of which is the formalization of the Sunken Road itself, which was at the time known as the road to Aslop's tavern or the county road. Wellford constructed stone walls along either side of the road where it ran through his property, and possibly constructed the earthen terraces which can be seen on the eastern slope of Willis Hill today. He also acquired the mill complex on the Hazel Run, and is believed to have built the small white cottage on the east side of the road that would later be known as the Ebert house and store. Around the same time that Wellford acquired the Willis Hill property, the parcel just to the north was purchased by John L. Marye. Marye built a hilltop manor called Brompton on the parcel.

Sometime around 1850, William Wellford sold 1000 acres to John Howison—including the mill complex, Willis Hill, and the land east of Sunken Road—which was by this point known as Spotsylvania Courthouse Road or Telegraph Road. Howison himself only held the property for a few years before dividing it, though he retained the mill on the Hazel Run as well as lands to the south and maintained a residence. Howison sold eighteen acres on Willis Hill to William Mitchell, who built a small brick dwelling and at least one outbuilding there. Howison also sold one hundred acres on the east side of Telegraph Road to a group of investors headed by Thomas Manuel, who proceeded to subdivide their acquisition into smaller lots.

By 1861, four families occupied the lots on the east side of Telegraph Road. The Eberts had occupied the white cottage across the road from Brompton, and just south along the road the Innis and Stevens houses were occupied by members of an extended family. Several lots to the south were occupied by Joseph Hall, who had built his house on the southernmost lot. Scattered trees and shrubs were clustered around the houses and their associated outbuildings, but the east side of the road remained primarily open, with fields continuing down the plain towards Fredericksburg. Across Telegraph Road from the Hall property, Willis Hill had recently been acquired by Douglas Gordon, and though its occupation status is uncertain, the small domestic complex remained atop the largely open hill, surrounded by scattered small trees. By this point, Telegraph Road had been in heavy use for many years, and the associated erosion and compaction had resulted in its sunken appearance in the landscape, especially where it had been initially cut into the surrounding topography.

**The Civil War (1862-1865):**

When war broke out in 1861 between Union and Confederate forces, Fredericksburg, situated halfway between Washington, D.C. and the Confederate capitol of Richmond, soon became an important logistical base for the Confederacy. In the late fall of 1862, newly appointed Union General Ambrose Burnside moved his forces south towards Fredericksburg with the goal of continuing on to attack Richmond. Unable to cross the Rappahannock River due to the destruction of the bridges at Fredericksburg, Burnside was forced to construct pontoon bridges. This gave Confederate forces under General Robert E. Lee time to fortify the south side of the river. Lee's artillery held the high ground along the spine of the hills west of Fredericksburg, including Willis Hill and Marye's Hill, referred to collectively as Marye's Heights. Defensive earthworks were constructed atop the heights, and infantry occupied Telegraph Road below, where the road's sunken character and surrounding stone walls created a ready-made shelter trench. The small valley where Howison's Mill was located served to house Confederate reserve troops and supplies. On December 11, Burnside's forces bombarded Fredericksburg, and were able to cross the river on pontoon boats both at the town itself and further down the river. After taking control of Fredericksburg, on December 13 Burnside's forces moved on the western ridgeline. The heaviest fighting that day occurred in the battle for Marye's Heights, as Lee's well-positioned forces cut down charge after charge of Union troops. Burnside withdrew his remaining troops back

across the river, dismantled the pontoon bridges, and the Battle of Fredericksburg drew to a close, the most lopsided Confederate victory of the war. Fredericksburg again saw fighting during the May 1863 Chancellorsville Campaign, part of the Union army's continuing attempt to reach Richmond. Additional earthworks were constructed atop Marye's Heights prior to the second battle, and a slit trench dug into Telegraph Road, but by this point the Confederate Army was widely dispersed, and relatively few troops were left to defend the seven-mile ridgeline west of Fredericksburg. Union troops under Major General John Sedgwick proceeded more cautiously than during the first battle, and on May 3 they were able to take control of Marye's Heights, though the Chancellorsville Campaign was ultimately a failure for the Union army.

#### Post-war Period and Transition to Public Ownership (1865-1927):

During the First and Second Battles of Fredericksburg, all of the homes in the Sunken Road area sustained significant damage, and the Joseph Hall house and the small buildings atop Wills Hill were substantially destroyed. After the cessation of conflict, however, the reoccupation and rebuilding began, and as time went on traces of the battles were largely subsumed into the changing landscape. Willis Hill was purchased in 1882 by Colonel Charles Richardson. He built a house atop the hill, and in the course of his residential landscaping is believed to have substantially filled in the remaining earthworks on his property. Soon thereafter, much of the famous stone wall along the east side of Telegraph Road was removed for unknown reasons. In 1894 the mill on the Hazel Run, now owned by J.C. Brent, was lost to fire, though it had not been operational for several years. As the population of Fredericksburg grew, streets and scattered homes began to fill the open plain west of historic downtown, including just east of Telegraph Road along Willis Street.

Though the physical traces of warfare were largely gone from the landscape, the battles were not forgotten. Veterans and citizens alike had begun to mark the battlefields around Fredericksburg with permanent memorials. The first of these in the Sunken Road area was installed ca. 1888, a monument to Confederate General Thomas Cobb, who had fallen defending the stone wall entrenchment during the first battle. This was followed in 1913 by a stone honoring a civilian named Martha Stevens, who had reportedly aided Confederate troops during the battles. The marker was placed along Telegraph Road at the site of her home, which had recently been lost to fire.

As the rancor of the Civil War had cooled towards the turn of the twentieth century, the desire to commemorate the battles as an important event brought veterans of both sides together in an effort to preserve the lands on which they had once fought. On February 14, 1927, Congress created Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park to preserve and protect four major Civil War battlefields in the Fredericksburg area, and to be administered by the U.S. War Department. Telegraph Road was officially renamed Sunken Road, for the characteristic that had made it a battlefield landmark. By this point, however, the once-open plain upon which so many had died in the fight for Marye's Heights had almost completely filled in with dense residential development, and no lands were acquired for the park in the Sunken Road area. Instead, the United Daughters of the Confederacy placed a marker commemorating the Battle of Fredericksburg at the corner of Sunken Road and Hanover Street. The War Department erected a series of identification tablets marking important battlefield landmarks, including several in the Sunken Road area.

#### National Park Service Period (1933-present):

On August 10, 1933, administration of the National Military Park system was transferred from the War Department to the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service. By 1934, the first piece of land for the park was acquired in the Sunken Road area. This was an approximately two-and-a-quarter-acre parcel on the east side of the Sunken Road at its intersection with U.S. Route 1 (Lafayette Boulevard), just east of the Fredericksburg National Cemetery. During the Civil War, this area had been part of the Joseph Hall farm. In 1935, design commenced for the museum and administration building that would later come to be called the Fredericksburg Battlefield visitor center. The building faced Lafayette Boulevard, set back behind an entrance loop that continued around the building to a public parking lot. On the northern end of the parking lot was an outlet onto Sunken Road, and on its east side were a maintenance garage and adjacent service area. Brick walkways were installed along the edge of the parking lot, at the front and rear entrances to the visitor center, and at the front of the property along Lafayette Boulevard. Primary construction was completed in 1937 by local contractors using relief workers assigned by the National Reemployment Agency, and the Civilian Conservation Corps was brought in to complete the landscaping and to reconstruct a portion of the famous Sunken Road stone wall along the western visitor center property boundary.

For several decades, park holdings around Sunken Road remained limited to the small visitor center property. In 1948, Willis Hill was acquired by the Daughters of Wisdom, who established a school called Montfort Academy, operating out of the Richardson house as well as a newly-constructed building to the west. Around the same time, the

University of Mary Washington acquired Marye's Hill and Brompton. The Ebert house, on the east side of the Sunken Road across from Brompton, was razed in 1957, having been unoccupied for a number of years. While it did not acquire the Ebert parcel, the park installed interpretive signage along the roadside in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The park purchased a half-acre parcel just north of the visitor center parking lot around 1964, but was unable to purchase the Ebert parcel to the north when it was threatened by development that same year. It was instead purchased by the University of Mary Washington, who in 1965 permitted the installation of a memorial to Confederate soldier Richard Kirkland on the property. Around 1972, the park further expanded its holdings in the Sunken Road area with the purchase of parcels including the Martha Stevens house site and the still standing Innis house. The city of Fredericksburg soon limited Sunken Road to one-way traffic to reduce vehicular-pedestrian conflicts. Shortly thereafter, the park made several alterations to the original visitor center property's circulation system, including an expansion of its parking lot and pedestrian walkways. By the end of the 1970s, the only parcel along the east side of Sunken Road not owned by the park was the former Ebert property, though it was publicly accessible as the site of the Kirkland Monument. All twentieth century homes standing on the newly-acquired properties on Sunken Road were demolished. The park also acquired the site of Howison's Mill complex, though the eastern portion of the site had been altered by twentieth century construction activity.

The next major change to the Sunken Road landscape came in the 1990s, when first the former Ebert property and then Willis Hill were transferred to the park, and residential lots on the west side of Willis Street were acquired. The twentieth century homes on Willis Street were razed following their acquisition, as were the contemporary Montfort Academy school buildings. An auxiliary parking lot for buses was built on the lot at the corner of Lafayette Boulevard and Willis Street. In 2004, the city of Fredericksburg relinquished its right-of-way to the stretch of Sunken Road between Lafayette Boulevard and Hanover Street. This enabled the park to close the road to vehicular traffic and rehabilitate it to better reflect its appearance at the time of the Civil War, including the reconstruction of the remainder of the famous east stone wall.

Today, the road itself is the centerpiece of the Sunken Road landscape, in which memorial, commemorative, and interpretive features are overlaid on the rehabilitated Civil War battle site. Three twentieth century homes remain standing on the east side of Willis Street, though these are slated for demolition upon their acquisition. The Brompton property remains held by the University of Mary Washington, and is not publicly accessible, though there are good views of it from Sunken Road.

## SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park is nationally significant under National Register Criterion A and Criterion D for its recurring role in the American Civil War as a theater of military action and for its potential to yield archeological information about the associated battles. The park is nationally significant under National Register Criterion A and meets Criteria Considerations D (cemeteries) and F (commemorative properties) for its important role in the memorialization and commemoration efforts carried out by Civil War veterans, citizens, and the federal government. The park is also nationally significant under National Register Criterion A for its role in the federal battlefield park development efforts carried out first by the War Department, and continued with the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s, and by the National Park Service. Several of the cultural resources preserved within the park are significant on the state level under National Register Criterion C as outstanding architectural examples from the antebellum plantation period in Virginia with elements of landscape architecture from late eighteenth century and early twentieth century design traditions. The park's overall period of significance begins in 1768 with the start of construction of Chatham Manor. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources (SHPO) has recommended extending the end date to 1965 for post-Civil War architectural resources and for monuments and other improvements in the park that resulted from the nation's commemoration of the Civil War Centennial that ended that year.

Based on the February 2010 draft of the National Register documentation for the park, the Sunken Road landscape is significant under National Register Criterion A for its association with historic events, Criterion C for its examples of pre-Civil War and Colonial Revival design traditions, and Criterion D for its potential to yield information important to history. Within the overall period of significance for the park (1768-1965), the Sunken Road landscape's period of significance is 1862-1965, which begins with the First Battle of Fredericksburg, and ends with the dedication of the Kirkland Monument, which coincided with the conclusion of commemorative activities associated with the 100-year anniversary of the end of the Civil War.

In the area of military history, the Sunken Road landscape is significant for its role in the American Civil War as a

theater of military action and for its potential to yield archeological information about the associated battles. In the area of commemoration, the Sunken Road landscape is significant for its role in the memorialization efforts undertaken by Civil War veterans and citizens and its role in the federal battlefield park development efforts carried out by the War Department and the National Park Service, including the area work by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the 1930s. In the area of architecture, the seventeenth-century Innis house and the Fredericksburg visitor center are recognized for their design styles. In the area of archeology, the Sunken Road landscape may yield further information about the battles.

#### ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION SUMMARY AND CONDITION

While the Sunken Road landscape underwent massive change over the course of the long historic period, many of the landscape's historic characteristics and features remain intact to their relevant period. Straddling the edge of the Virginia piedmont and the coastal plain, the ridgeline of Marye's Heights rises above the west side of Sunken Road, while to the east the land slopes gently down towards downtown Fredericksburg. The small valley on the southwest side of Willis Hill where Confederate reserve troops and supplies sheltered along the Hazel Run stream remains undeveloped. It was this combination of topography that made the site such a strong defensive position for Confederate forces during the Civil War battles at Fredericksburg, along with the partially-sunken character of the road running along the base of the heights. The stone wall along the eastern side of the road that enhanced the defensive position largely remains intact today, in a combination of original and reconstructed portions, and the road itself has been rehabilitated to reflect its historic appearance. The ca. 1859 Innis House still stands on the east side of the road, and the 1830s mansion Brompton overlooks the Sunken Road landscape from the top of Marye's Hill. Additional traces of the battlefield landscape may be found in archeological sites scattered throughout the property.

After the end of the war, the Sunken Road landscape continued to develop as a residential neighborhood, but the lives lost there were not forgotten. The series of monuments honoring figures from the First Battle of Fredericksburg which were placed near Sunken Road in the century following the Civil War remain effectively unchanged. The early military park development centering upon the 1930s Colonial Revival visitor center retains its essential historic design and character, and even some small scale features such as early signage. When it was built, this small property and the Fredericksburg National Cemetery across the street were the only areas of the historic battlefield that were truly publicly-accessible, and they bore little resemblance to their historic condition. Today, the visitor center serves as a gateway to a greatly-expanded public landscape, which has been rehabilitated by the National Park Service to effectively communicate its Civil War history to the visitor.

Since the end of the historic period, and especially since the end of the Civil War, certain landscape characteristics or features have been altered or lost. Undoubtedly, the most important impact has been from changes in land use across the greater battlefield, as the largely open farmland east of Sunken Road evolved into a dense residential neighborhood. This significantly compromised the historic spatial organization of the greater battlefield and views from Sunken Road, although the park has worked to restore the general open character of the portion under their management. The earthworks which were constructed in advance of the two battles at Fredericksburg have been either removed or significantly altered since the end of the fighting. Most of the houses that stood on the historic battlefield have also been lost, with their associated outbuildings and other domestic features. The mill complex in the small valley behind Willis Hill which gave shelter to both Confederate and Union soldiers at various times is gone, and the military road up the hill has been largely obliterated by a modern road, itself now in ruins.

Landscape characteristics and features integral to the post-civil war shaping of the battlefield landscape have also been impacted, but to a much lesser extent. The memorial and commemorative features installed over the century following the war have experienced some change in setting as the neighborhood was converted to a public park, but this has not lessened their impact. Likewise, the change in setting of the original visitor center property has been beneficial. The circulation around the visitor center has been altered slightly since the end of the historic period in order to facilitate contemporary use and access, but the changes have not negatively impacted the property's character. Some signage has also been replaced since the end of the historic period in order to enhance the park's interpretation of the Civil War landscape.

The Sunken Road landscape is in overall good condition, showing no clear evidence of major negative disturbance or deterioration by natural and/or human forces, although certain features do warrant attention. The portion of reconstructed stone wall built by the Civilian Conservation Corps is slowly deteriorating, and the loss of stones has resulted in a noticeable reduction in the wall's historic height. The grass pathways atop Willis Hill have been worn to bare ground in places by pedestrian use. The third issue is erosion on the southwest slope of Willis Hill, which poses a

potential threat to the archeological resources within the Howison’s Mill area, as well as the stability of the adjacent Fredericksburg National Cemetery.

**Landscape Hierarchy Description:**

In the Cultural Landscape Inventory database, two landscapes have been identified for the park: Fredericksburg Battlefield-South, and Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania Landscape. The Sunken Road Landscape—along with Chancellorsville Battlefield, Spotsylvania Battlefield, Wilderness Battlefield, Chatham Manor, and Ellwood—are component landscapes of the larger Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania Landscape.

**Landscape Type:**

- Historic Site
- Historic Designed Landscape

**Other Names:**

|                    |                                                                                     |                         |                           |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Other Name:</b> | Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park                              | <b>Other Name Type:</b> | Current                   |
| <b>Other Name:</b> | Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park | <b>Other Name Type:</b> | Both Current And Historic |

**Site Plan**

# Sunken Road Landscape Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park



Sunken Road Landscape Existing Conditions, 2011.

# Sunken Road Landscape Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park



Sunken Road Landscape Existing Conditions Detail Map, 2011.

*Site map, Drawing 1, 2025 edits.*



PEPC 32366 City of Fredericksburg Virginia Central Railroad Trail Extension - 2014

*Site map, Drawing 2, 2025 edits.*



PEPC 62591-Removal of Non-Contributing House and Carriage-Boys -2024

PEPC 125273- Remove Fence and Vegetation From FVC Grounds - 2025

PEPC 43512 - Removal of Non-Contributing House, Richardson - 2015  
PEPC 72187 - Removal of Angry ~~House~~ and Evil Hedge at the Richard Kirkland  
Mound on the Fredericksburg Battlefield - 2017  
PEPC 62588 - Removal of Non-Contributing House, Struder - 2024

## Concurrence Information

### Concurrence Status:

|                                                 |            |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Park Superintendent Concurrence:</b>         | Yes        |
| <b>Park Superintendent Date of Concurrence:</b> | 09/19/2011 |

### Completion Status Explanatory Narrative:

In April 2011, existing conditions at the Sunken Road were inventoried and mapped. Historical Landscape Architect Michael Commisso and Student Conservation Association intern Laura Roberts with the National Park Service's Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation in Boston completed the field work. The park contact for the Cultural Landscapes Inventory is Eric Mink, Historian and Cultural Resources Program Manager. He can be reached by telephone at (540) 371-6416 or by email at [Eric\\_Mink@nps.gov](mailto:Eric_Mink@nps.gov).

### Concurrence Graphic Information:

Attachment File Path



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Historic Resources

Doug Domenech  
Secretary of Natural Resources

2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221

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September 2, 2010

Elizabeth Igleheart  
National Register Coordinator  
History Program  
Northeast Region  
15 State Street  
Boston, MA 02109

**Re: Updated National Register Nomination for Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park**

Dear Ms. Igleheart:

Thank you for sending us the updated draft nomination of **Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park**. I am very glad that this updated nomination has been produced and we will have a more substantial and detailed document building upon the 1966 listing/1972 nomination, referred to at that period as **Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park and Cemetery**. I have asked Marc Wagner, Registers Program Manager, and David Edwards, Northern Region Preservation Office Director, review the draft and provide comments. Our overall recommendation is that your nomination should go ahead (assuming our comments will be addressed). We agree with boundaries and the resources that are recommended as contributing and non-contributing in your inventory.

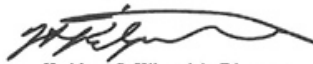
I will be sending staff comments, drafted directly on the nomination, which will also include those that result from Historian Dr. Kelly Spradley-Kurowski's review of Section 8. At present, the major points that David Edwards noted were the lack of survey forms entered into the DHR Data Sharing System database; an inventory format that is unusual for our standard nomination format; no legal notification labels and accompanying required state-level processing forms; there was no map that recorded contributing and non-contributing resources. I am aware that Marc Wagner has spoken to you about the need for notification labels for owners that may have property inside the boundaries and for owners adjacent to the boundaries. He has also mentioned the eventual need for a public hearing, following notification of all owners and adjacent owners, prior to taking the matter to our Boards for Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places consideration. We would also encourage contact and meetings with owners prior to the required Board meeting public hearing so they have an opportunity to comment early in the process.

*SHPO concurrence letters, September 2, 2010 and March 9, 2011 (8 pages).*

We will finish our review of the draft and send along our comments. I would ask that you work directly with David Edwards as you go forward. His address is DHR-NRPO, P.O. Box 519, Stephen's City, Virginia 22655 and his phone number is 540-868-7031.

We look forward to finalizing this greatly improved nomination. Please feel free to contact me, if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Kathleen S. Kilpatrick, Director  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State Historic Preservation Officer

by identification number within each battlefield might be the best way to arrange the inventory in this case. The inventory will contain similar information presented in the FSNMP-All Resource Inventory that was created by the Paula Reed & Associates and accompanied the draft nomination. We have indicated on the first page of that inventory the basic information needed for our inventory. Are the "NR #'s in this inventory assigned by the Park or a system created by the authors of the nomination? I do find them useful for identifying the resources in association with each of the battlefields.

Concerning the entire draft nomination, we agree with Patrick Andrus's findings that the documentation prepared by Paula S. Reed & Associates is of high quality and is clearly stated and articulated. For the most part, our comments, edits, and questions are directly indicated on the draft itself. More specific comments follow.

Section 1: The name of the NR listing in 1966 for the battlefields park was "Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park and Cemetery". The NPS website and park brochure indicate the name of the park has not changed ("and Cemetery" was added to the name of the original nomination), so why is a new name being proposed here? I would think we should continue the same name for the revised nomination unless the NPS wants to change the name. Obviously, the name chosen will need to be correctly cited throughout the nomination. If the name remains the same as the original listing name, the abbreviation "FSNMP" may not be applicable unless it is explained in the nomination that it is a shortened acronym for the park.

Section 2: List the counties and the City of Fredericksburg where all four battlefields are located as well as their codes.

Section 5 (Classification): The "inholders" mentioned on p. 1 seems to indicate private property is included within the district. If land authorized for future park acquisition is part of the revised nomination, we know private property will also be included.

Section 5 (Related Multiple Property Listing): Civil War in Virginia, 1861-1865, Historical and Archaeological Resources MPS should be indicated here.

Section 5 (Number of Resources within Property): As we have indicated in the nomination, on the maps, and in the FSNMP All Resource Inventory, these numbers should change as we have found some resources should not have been counted; others perhaps should be excluded from the district; and the contributing/noncontributing status of some resources should be changed if the period of significance is extended and the architecture area of significance is more fully developed as we recommend. Also, be sure the 24 resources previously listed in the NR are not counted in the Number of Resources within Property entries.

→ Section 8 (Areas of Significance): We believe the "Engineering" Area of Significance should either be better developed in Section 8 of the nomination or omitted. Also we prefer "Other: Commemoration" here since "Commemoration" is not among the choices

post-Civil War architecture (not just those of exceptional significance) and to include Mission 66-era buildings and structures if the period of significance is extended to 1965.

Section 9: Bibliography looks fine.

Section 10: The UTM references are outside the battlefield units on the USGS maps submitted. They should be located at various points along the boundaries of each battlefield unit including each discontinuous unit associated with a battlefield. Only one UTM point is necessary if the discontinuous unit is less than 10 acres.

USGS Maps: The boundaries of each battlefield unit should be clearly indicated on the USGS maps. I saw no drawn lines at all—only UTM reference points that are outside the boundaries of each battlefield unit. As stated above, UTM points should be located on boundaries of each battlefield unit and discontinuous units associated with battlefields. DHR will need a set of USGS maps in addition to those submitted to the NPS.

Maps 1 through 44:

- 1) These maps are great for showing contributing and noncontributing resources in relation to each other and to each battlefield unit; however, the district boundaries for each battlefield unit are very difficult to see in most cases. Thin blue lines that seem to indicate district boundaries on some maps need to be highlighted (bolded?) for better clarity and indicated as boundaries in a map key.
- 2) On some maps district boundaries (thin blue lines?) do not coincide with district boundaries on USGS maps (see Maps 1 and 3). Also, areas that presumably are not owned by the Battlefields Park and indicated on maps as excluded from the district need to be included within the nominated district even though they are privately owned, and perhaps noncontributing, because the National Register program does not allow “donut holes” in districts (see Maps 11, 18, 27, and 38).
- 3) It appears that some areas shaded in the National Park brochure as “Land authorized for future park acquisition”, although privately owned, should be included in the revised district boundaries. In this way some discontinuous units could then be absorbed into larger contiguous land areas of the battlefield.
- 4) Some important resources, like Brompton and Braehead on Map 5, appear to be outside district boundaries. See also Maps 1, 8, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18, 21, 22, 25, 27, 33, 34, 35, and 36 for other resources that appear to be outside district boundaries.
- 5) Two areas on Map 5 are outlined in blue lines (district boundaries?) but contain no resources according to map.
- 6) Map 8 shows CH00121, CH00122, CH00159 and CH00163, but the All Resource Inventory shows the same resources as FR00121, FR00122, FR00159,



## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

### Department of Historic Resources

Douglas W. Domenech  
*Secretary of Natural Resources*

2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221

March 9, 2011

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Ms. Elizabeth Igleheart  
National Register Coordinator  
History Program  
Northeast Region  
15 State Street  
Boston, MA 02109

RE: Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

Dear Elizabeth,

I enjoyed our recent conversation. Thank you for your patience awaiting our review and comments on the draft of the revised Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park National Register nomination and accompanying materials. Kelly Spradley-Kurowski of the DHR Register Program in the Richmond Office and I were the principal reviewers.

Before commenting on the document, however, as we discussed, DHR requires all historic district nominations (including battlefields) to be accompanied by survey files on all contributing and noncontributing resources within the district. DHR uses a database called Data Sharing System (DSS) to record these resources. Each survey file consists of the following: a hard-copy DSS survey form on the primary resource (also includes any secondary resources associated with the property); a simply sketched site plan of the property; black-and-white photos of all the resources associated with the property (buildings require only exterior photographs); and a photocopied section of a USGS map indicating the location of the property in relation to the district (or battlefield). Survey materials for about five properties in the proposed district are placed in large file envelopes (provided by DHR) for our Archives. DHR offers one-day (or more) training in the use of DSS in the Richmond Office of DHR and we can send more information on DSS if requested. We also have a Survey Manual that provides more detailed information on conducting architectural surveys in Virginia.

Once the survey data is entered into the DSS database, an inventory, consisting of brief information on each resource, can be generated by DSS. The inventory is a DHR requirement and it is added to the end of Section 7 in the nomination. The inventory entries are arranged in a logical sequence, usually by address if applicable, but a system

Administrative Services  
10 Courthouse Ave.  
Petersburg, VA 23803  
Tel: (804) 862-6416  
Fax: (804) 862-6196

Capital Region Office  
2801 Kensington Office  
Richmond, VA 23221  
Tel: (804) 367-2323  
Fax: (804) 367-2391

Tidewater Region Office  
14415 Old Courthouse Way 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Floor  
Newport News, VA 23608  
Tel: (757) 886-2807

Western Region Office  
962 Kime Lane  
Salem, VA 24153  
Tel: (540) 387-5428  
Fax: (540) 387-5446

Northern Region Office  
5357 Main Street  
PO Box 519  
Stephens City, VA 22655  
Tel: (540) 868-7031

in the list of Areas of Significance in NPS Bulletin "How to Complete the National Register Registration Form" (Bulletin 16A).

Section 8 (Period of Significance): We believe a better ending date would be 1965. Although it extends beyond the traditional fifty-year period of evaluation, the period of significance should include the entire Mission 66 era because of its significant impact on the Park. We feel the buildings and structures designed in the Mission 66 architectural style are significant resources that are important to recognize as contributing resources if they retain sufficient integrity. The authors considered these resources as noncontributing. Another reason for extending the period of significance is to capture the monuments and other improvements in the Park that resulted from the nation's commemoration of the Civil War Centennial which ended in 1965.

Section 7, p. 2: "ID Tablets (NR#AU0275)" should be either individually counted as resources or not counted at all because they are not "substantial in size and scale" (see NPS Bulletin 16A, p. 17). "Museum Collection (NR#AU0276)" on p. 2, "Collection of Period Furnishings (NR#JS01651)" on p. 30, and "Authentic Jackson Items (NR#JS0165e)" on p. 30 should not be counted as resources per NPS Bulletin 16A.

Section 7, p. 15: In the second paragraph, the post-Civil War buildings constructed up to 1965 (if the period of significance is increased) that retain integrity should be considered contributing if the argument for architecture as an area of significance is strengthened and more fully developed for post-Civil War resources in the discussion of the context entitled Architecture and Landscape Architecture of the Middle Peninsula (1768-1959) beginning on p. 43. Please consider changing noncontributing buildings and sites to contributing throughout the nomination where post-Civil War resources are concerned.

Section 7, p. 22: In the discussion of the Ellwood Pump House and Outbuildings in the first paragraph, a reference is made to the Virginia SHPO recommending these post-Civil War resources as not eligible and, therefore, noncontributing. These resources should be considered contributing within the context of this revised nomination, as architecture is an area of significance (1768-1965?) that was not included in the original nomination. Other such references to the recommendations of resource ineligibility by the Virginia SHPO should be re-evaluated where relevant.

Section 8: Continuation Sheet Page Numbers should be in sequential order regardless of section; therefore, the first page of Section 8 should be Page 72 in this draft nomination. Pages in Sections 9 and 10 should be similarly numbered.

Section 8: DHR prefers endnotes rather than footnote references and references (in parentheses) within the text.

Section 8, p. 29: Make sure Chickamauga is spelled correctly.

Section 8, p. 43: The historic context entitled "Architecture and Landscape Architecture of the Middle Peninsula (1768-1959)" will have to be revised to address contributing

and FR00163. Which are correct? Are they associated with the Battle of Chancellorsville or the Battle of Fredericksburg?

- 7) On Map 29, FR0140 is a noncontributing site. It is not clear why the area around it is a discontinuous unit of the battlefield. Perhaps something important was standing here or happened during the Battle of Fredericksburg? If the area is to be included in the district, an explanation is necessary in the nomination.
- 8) DHR will need a final set of Maps 1-44 in addition to the set submitted to the NPS.

Photographs:

- 1) An excessive number of photographs (314) were submitted for the National Register nomination. We recommend submitting fewer photos concentrating on the principal resources within the battlefields park.
- 2) A few photographs are underexposed (such as photos FR-74, FR-83, FR-87, JS-5, JS-6, JS-7, and JS-12); others are unnecessarily repeated (photos JS-9 and JS-10; WI-5 and WI-6; CH-28 and CH-29); and others do not adequately show the resources—too far away or poorly framed and are unacceptable—such as photos CH-8, CH-10, CH-30, FR-63, FR-98, FR-100, JS-18, SP-1, SP-2, SP-4, WI-3, WI-8, WI-28, and WI-63—however, most photos submitted are of good quality.
- 3) At the top of each photo are the letters “FRSP” which I assume stands for Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania. We prefer each photo be labeled “Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park” if the original name of the nomination is still used. I realize that is a long title, so perhaps the alternative method of labeling photos, outlined in Bulletin 16A, p. 64, should be adopted here. That method involves using continuation sheets to provide information common to all photographs and focuses on the information peculiar to each photo.
- 4) DHR will need a final set of black-and-white photographs in addition to those submitted to the NPS.

Overall Boundary Map: I am unsure DHR received the “Overall Boundary Map from the FSNMP General Management Plan (1986)” that is mentioned in the Verbal Boundary Description; therefore, I cannot comment on it.

DHR Nomination Check List and Legal Requirement Form: I have enclosed a DHR Register Nomination Check List that consultants writing NR nominations are required to submit to DHR. Consultants find it very helpful in completing a nomination submission to DHR. Section E of the Check List mentions a separate Legal Requirement Form (also enclosed) that must be submitted with mailing labels for all property owners within the nominated district as well as property owners whose properties are adjacent but outside the boundaries of the proposed district. Tax parcel information is also required. This

information is needed because DHR is legally required by act of the state legislature to notify by letter all property owners within the district and adjacent to the district.

In closing, I want to thank you for allowing DHR to review and comment on this nomination. Despite the number of items needing attention from our standpoint at DHR, it is a good nomination and one that we encourage the Park Service to continue to revise and strengthen to obtain a product of which we are all satisfied.

Please call on me in the future to assist you in any way with this nomination. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at 540-868-7030 or [david.edwards@dhr.virginia.gov](mailto:david.edwards@dhr.virginia.gov).

Sincerely yours,

  
David Edwards

Sunken Road Landscape  
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

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CULTURAL LANDSCAPES INVENTORY  
CONCURRENCE FORM

Sunken Road Landscape  
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park concurs with the findings of the Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) for the Sunken Road Landscape including the following specific components:

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY: Must Be Preserved and Maintained

CONDITION ASSESSMENT: Good

**Good:** indicates the inventory unit shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbance and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. The inventory unit's cultural and natural values are as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

**Fair:** indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the character defining elements will cause the inventory unit to degrade to a poor condition.

**Poor:** indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of major disturbance and rapid deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Immediate corrective action is required to protect and preserve the remaining historical and natural values.

The Cultural Landscape Inventory for the Sunken Road Landscape is hereby approved and accepted.

*Russell P. Smith* 9/19/11  
Superintendent, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park Date

Park concurrence form, September 19, 2011.

Cultural Landscapes Inventory  
CLI Update Certification Form  
2025

Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park  
Ellwood, Fredericksburg National Cemetery, Sunken Road Landscape

Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park concurs with the updates for the following CLIs, including:

CONDITION ASSESSMENT:      Fair – Ellwood  
                                                 Good – Fredericksburg National Cemetery  
                                                 Good – Sunken Road Landscape

**Good:** indicates the inventory unit shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbance and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. The inventory unit’s cultural and natural values are as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

**Fair:** indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the character defining elements, will cause the inventory unit to degrade to a poor condition.

**Poor:** indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of major disturbance and rapid deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Immediate corrective action is required to protect and preserve the remaining historical and natural values.

The CLI Updates at Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park are hereby approved and accepted.

**LEWIS ROGERS**      Digitally signed by LEWIS  
                                                 ROGERS  
                                                 Date: 2025.03.25 13:08:15 -04'00'

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent, Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park      Date

*Park concurrence form, March 25, 2025.*

**Revision:**

| Revised By   | Type of Revision | Revision Date | Revision Narrative                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jeff Killion | CLI Update       | 03/25/2025    | Three levels of effort have been developed for CLI Updates: A, B, and C. Level C is limited to a condition reassessment of the landscape; Level B includes C and is a targeted update of select data fields; Level A includes C and is a comprehensive update of all data fields. This 2025 update to the Sunken Road Landscape CLI has been conducted at a Level C effort. See Landscape Documents in CRIS-CL for correspondences with park. |

## Geographic Information

### State and County:

| State    | County                       |
|----------|------------------------------|
| Virginia | Spotsylvania & Orange County |
| Virginia | Fredericksburg City          |

**Size (Acres):** 36.6

### Land Tract Number(s)

Tract number according to park boundary maps is followed by the tax parcel number according to the most recent City of Fredericksburg data.

02-103 (A-14-700); 02-105, 02-106, 02-107, and 02-108 (together listed as 133-1013); 02-109 (127-701); 02-110 (126-922); 02-111 (Sunken Road, city tax parcel number not known); 02-113 (133-1001 and 133-1003); 02-114 (133-504); 02-115 (133-508); 02-116(133-510); 02-117 (133-512); 02-118 (133-514); 02-119 (133-516); 02-121(133-520); 02-124 (133-524); 02-126 (133-532); 02-127 (133-536); 02-128 (133-538); 01-160 (A13-LB); 01-157 (A15-2-P12)

### Boundary Description:

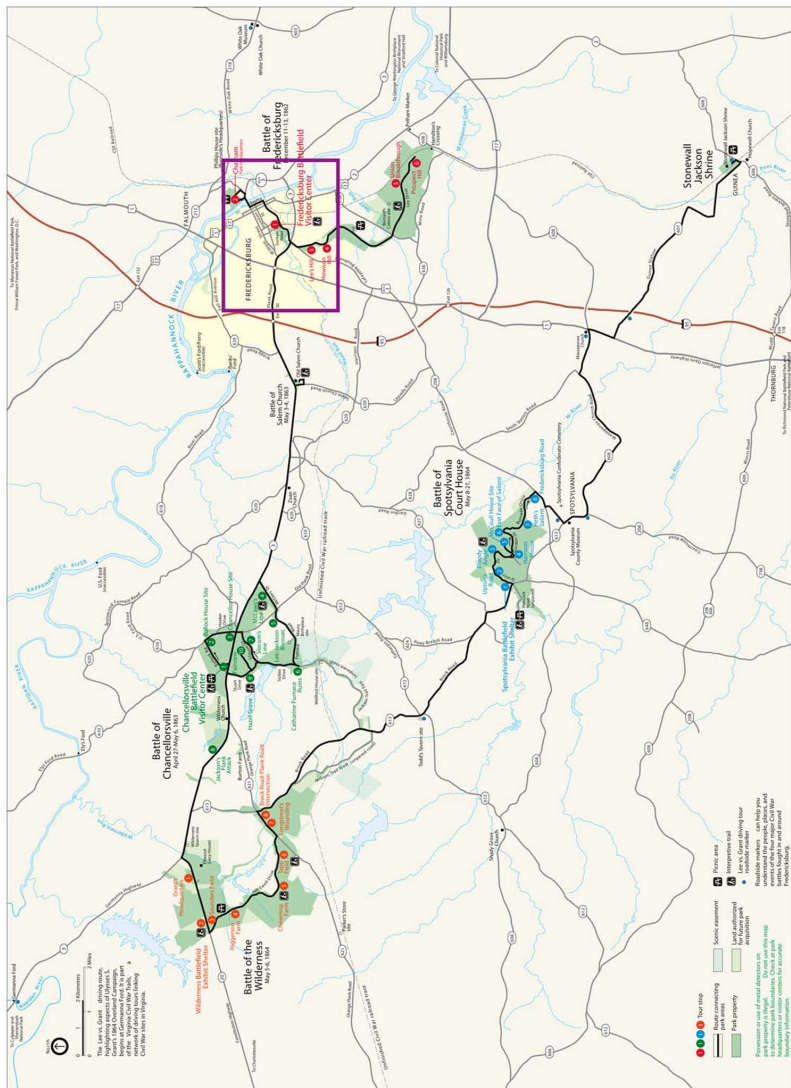
The boundary of the Sunken Road landscape is irregular and asymmetrical, encompassing a total of 36.6 acres. Its easternmost point is at the northwest corner of Lafayette Boulevard and Willis Street. The boundary proceeds northwest along Willis Street, with the exception of cutouts around the privately-owned tracts 02-120 (133-518 according to city tax parcel data), 02-122 (133-522), and 02-125 (133-526 and 133-530). It then turns west approximately fifty feet around a right-of-way at the end of Mercer Street, before turning back and continuing roughly northeast along the irregular eastern edge of tract 02-109 (127-701). The boundary then crosses Kirkland Street, encompassing approximately the last one hundred feet of the road, before proceeding southwest about forty feet, and then continuing northwest along the eastern edge of tract 02-110 (126-922) to Hanover Street. The boundary runs west along Hanover Street approximately one hundred feet before turning south again, following the curve of the stone wall that marks the eastern edge of the Brompton property, tract 02-104 (203-2-42). About 500 feet south of Hanover Street, the boundary turns southwest along the northern edge of tract 02-103 (A-14-700), roughly southwest along the edge of tract 01-160 (A13-LB), and then south along the western edge of tract 01-157 (A15-2-P12) to Lafayette Boulevard. The boundary then proceeds east along Lafayette Boulevard, while jogging north around tracts 01-173 (A15-2-1240), 01-174 (A15-2-P9), and A12-1208 (NPS tract number not known). It turns northwest and then east around the Fredericksburg National Cemetery property, and then cuts diagonally across the Sunken Road to Lafayette Boulevard, where it proceeds east to close at the northwest corner with Willis Street. There is one isolated hole within the boundary of the Sunken Road landscape, created by the one-acre privately-owned Willis family cemetery, tract 02-102 (city tax parcel number not known). It is surrounded by tract 02-103 (A-14-700), and located just north of the Fredericksburg National Cemetery.

**Boundary Coordinates**

| Source            | Type of Point | Latitude          | Longitude        | Narrative |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------|
| USGS Map 1:24,000 | Area          | -77.4709975423808 | 38.2970808776242 |           |
| USGS Map 1:24,000 | Area          | -77.465853135634  | 38.297099087455  |           |
| USGS Map 1:24,000 | Area          | -77.471150852391  | 38.2914910282461 |           |
| USGS Map 1:24,000 | Area          | -77.4672604714255 | 38.291392749558  |           |

# Sunken Road Landscape Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

## Location Map:



Location Map. Location of the Sunken Road landscape (indicated by the purple box) within Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park (Park files, annotated by Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, hereafter OCLP).



**Regional Landscape Contexts:**

**Type of Context:** Physiographic

**Description:**

The Sunken Road landscape is located in north-central Virginia, in a transitional zone between the Piedmont and the coastal plain, a finger of which follows the Rappahannock River to a point just north of Fredericksburg. Here the small Rappahannock Falls marks the uppermost limits of deep-water navigation on the river. Below this point, the narrow finger of plain along the river is bordered on either side, at a varying distance, by a broad terrace which represents the fringes of the Piedmont. On the east bank of the river, directly opposite historic downtown Fredericksburg, is a portion of this terrace known as Stafford Heights. South and west of downtown, the terrace is broken up by a series of faults running roughly east-west to meet the Rappahannock River. The Hazel Run Fault shapes the southern face of Willis Hill, itself the southern portion of the larger Marye's Heights landform. Marye's Heights overlooks an ancient, abandoned channel of the Rappahannock River that once ran west of the present day location of downtown Fredericksburg. The bedrock of Marye's Heights is composed primarily of fluvially-deposited sandstone and conglomerate.

**Type of Context:** Cultural

**Description:**

Downtown Fredericksburg has been designated as a forty-block historic district on the National Register of Historic Places, and retains over 350 buildings dating to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Sunken Road landscape lies approximately a quarter-mile west of the edge of the historic district, with the neighborhood in between composed primarily of dense late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential development, with a few scattered pre-Civil War buildings mixed in, as well as the Confederate Cemetery. The neighborhood north of the Sunken Road landscape is of a similar age and character as that to the immediate west, with the notable exception of the main campus of the University of Mary Washington, located on the former Lewis Plantation. West of Willis Hill, the university campus continues in the less dense form of an outdoor athletic complex. To the south lie Lafayette Boulevard (U.S. Route 1) and the Blue and Gray Parkway (State Route 3), on the other side of which begins the landscape of office parks, shopping plazas, and subdivisions which dominates the greater Fredericksburg area today. Amongst the contemporary development, the leading edge of the ridgeline which picks up on the southern side of the Hazel Run Fault is preserved as part of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, as is the portion of Stafford Heights surrounding Chatham Manor.

**Type of Context:** Political

**Description:**

The Sunken Road landscape is located within the current limits of the independent City of Fredericksburg, approximately ten square miles in size and located halfway between Washington, D.C. and Richmond, Virginia. The city is the commercial hub of the rapidly growing north-central Virginia, and has a population of approximately 24,000. Access to several major highways and arterial roads, along with rail service, enable many area residents commute to the greater Washington D.C. area. The largest local employers are schools and hospitals, and historic tourism is a major factor in the economy. The city maintains a public transportation network in the form of buses. The Rappahannock River, the Jefferson Davis Highway (U.S. Route 1), and the Blue and Gray Parkway (State Route 3) form a rough triangle, essentially representing Fredericksburg's development through the mid-twentieth century. Within this triangle development is relatively compact and laid out in a rectilinear manner. Zoning is primarily residential with a compact downtown business district, and small isolated areas of industrial or retail use. The Sunken Road landscape is located within this triangle, at the southwest corner. Beyond the triangle is more recent development, with residential areas taking the form of subdivisions, and commercial development concentrated in a series of sprawling shopping centers. Land zoned for industrial uses is concentrated in the southern portion of the city, adjacent to the Sunken Road landscape on the south and east.

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park was established in 1927, and initially managed by the U.S. War Department. The Sunken Road landscape was not incorporated into the park until after the military park system was transferred from the War Department to the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service in 1933. Between ca. 1964 and 2001, park holdings in the Sunken Road area expanded from the initial 2.23-acre visitor center property to the 36.6 acres that currently make up the Sunken Road landscape.

## Management Information

### General Management Information

**Management Category:** Must be Preserved and Maintained

**Management Category Date:** 09/19/2011

### Management Category Explanatory Narrative:

The Sunken Road landscape meets the management category "Must Be Preserved and Maintained" because the preservation of the site is related to the legislated significance of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. The park was authorized by an act of Congress on February 14, 1927 (44 Stat. 1091). The purpose of the park, as stated in the act, is "to commemorate the Civil War battles of Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania Court House, Wilderness, and Chancellorsville, including Salem Church...and to mark and preserve for historical purposes the breastworks, earthworks, gun emplacements, walls, or other defenses or shelters used by the armies in said battles...and together with such additional land as the Secretary of War may deem necessary for monuments, markers, tablets, roads, highways, paths, approaches, and to carry out the general purposes of this Act."

The Sunken Road landscape is a key component of the Fredericksburg Battlefield. It is nationally significant as the site of direct conflict on two separate occasions during the Civil War. It is also nationally significant for its role in early memorialization and commemoration efforts and in the development of the national military park system.

### Management Agreements:

### Legal Interests:

**Type of Interest:** Fee Simple

**Narrative:**

**Located in managed wilderness?:** Unknown

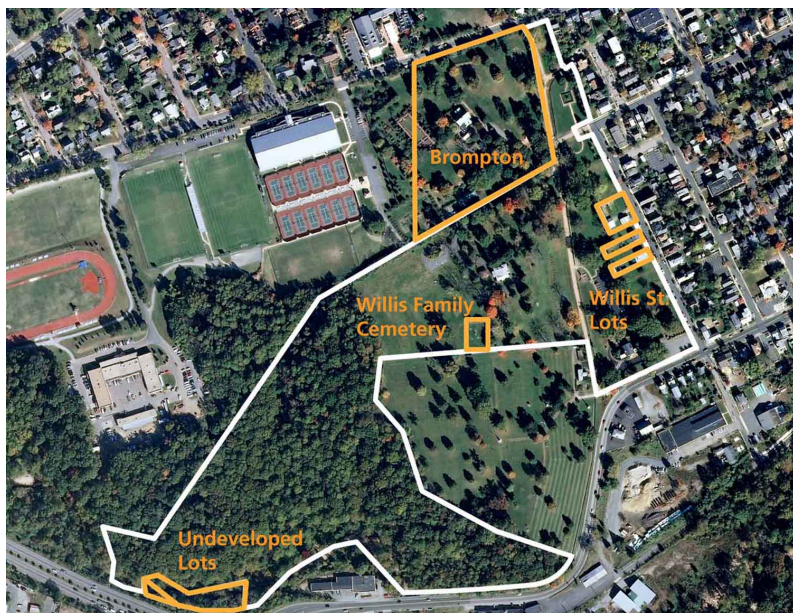
## Adjacent Lands Information

**Do Adjacent Lands Contribute?** Yes

### Adjacent Lands Narrative:

Seven parcels adjacent to the Sunken Road landscape are within the park's authorized boundary and contribute to its significance, though they are currently privately held. The first of these is the Brompton property on Marye's Hill, west of the Sunken Road and north of Willis Hill. Currently owned by the University of Mary Washington, Brompton, or the Marye family mansion, served as a headquarters for the commander of the Confederate defenses at Marye's Heights, General James Longstreet. The property also contains the best preserved of the earthworks remaining at Marye's Heights from the battles, and its over 500-feet of pre-Civil War stone walls are directly adjacent to the western side of Sunken Road. The second contributing adjacent property is the one-acre Willis Family Cemetery on Willis Hill, which is today owned by the heirs of the Wellford family but is completely surrounded by park lands. The brick-walled cemetery served as a field hospital during the battles, and despite subsequent repairs still shows damage from gunfire. Three twentieth century homes remain occupied on the west side of Willis Street, and two small undeveloped parcels along the Hazel Run are privately-held as well.

**Adjacent Lands Graphic:**



Adjacent Lands Information. Privately-owned but contributing to the significance of the Sunken Road landscape include Brompton, the Willis Family Cemetery, three Willis St. lots, and two small undeveloped parcels (2009 USGS image annotated by OCLP).

## National Register Information

### National Register of Historic Places

**Documentation Status:** SHPO Documented

**Documentation Narrative Description:**

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park was established by Congress on February 14, 1927 (44 Stat. 1091), under the name Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park. It was transferred from the War Department to the National Park Service on August 10, 1933. The National Park Service added the Sunken Road landscape to the National Military Park in phases between c. 1933 and 2001.

The National Military Park was administratively listed in the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966 with passage of the National Historic Preservation Act. National Register documentation for the park was approved on May 23, 1978 under the name Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park and Cemetery. The documentation identified significance under Criterion A in the area of military and Criterion C in the area of architecture. Twenty-three resources associated with the battlefields of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, The Wilderness, and Spotsylvania were identified, including the stone wall and the “Sunken Road,” Ennis house [sic], and the Stevens house site. Thirty-five earthen fortifications in the park were also mentioned in the documentation but were not specifically enumerated. The period of significance was listed as 1700-1899, with a specific span of dates from December 1862 and the Battle of Fredericksburg to May 1864 and the Battle of the Wilderness.

The National Military Park’s National Register documentation is currently under revision to address park property added after 1978 and more thoroughly document the list of resources and areas of significance. In the draft documentation dated February 2010, significance is identified under four historic contexts under Criterion A in the area of military; Criterion B for associations with Lieutenant General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson, General Robert E. Lee, Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, Major General Joseph Hooker, and Major General Ambrose Burnside; Criterion C in the areas of architecture, landscape architecture, and engineering; and Criterion D for archeology (historic—non-aboriginal). The property also meets Criteria Considerations D (Cemeteries) and F (Commemorative Properties). The overall period of significance in the February 2010 draft begins in 1768 with construction of Chatham Manor, the oldest dated architectural resource in the district, and ends in 1959 to comply with the National Register eligibility 50-year rule, 1959 being 50 years from the date of completion of the nomination. Significant dates include 1768 for the construction of Chatham, 1921 for the Chatham garden designed by Ellen Shipman, 1862 for the Battle of Fredericksburg, 1863 for the Battle of Chancellorsville, 1864 for the Battles of Wilderness and Spotsylvania, 1865 for the National Cemetery, 1927 for the year the park was established, and 1933 when construction by the Civilian Conservation Corps began. For the Sunken Road landscape, the documentation identifies numerous resources. The Sunken Road (#FR0152a), original and reconstructed dry-laid stone walls (#FR0152d, #FR0152c), Innis house (#FR0153a), Martha Stevens stone (#FR0155c), Battle of Fredericksburg UDC marker (#FR0156), Cobb monument (#FR0161), (Road) ID Tablet (#AU0275) and several house sites “marked by depressions in the ground in a grassy landscape” are described as contributing. The Martha Stevens grave urn (#FR0155b) and the Kirkland Monument (#FR0158) are identified as a noncontributing. In the visitor center area, the Fredericksburg visitor center (#FR0146d), entrance loop (#FR0146a), brick walkways along Lafayette Boulevard (#FR0146b), and Fredericksburg CCC maintenance building (#FR0146c) (now a museum/shop) are contributing, while a “restroom” (#FR0146e) is identifying as noncontributing, although the National Register draft’s information on this last structure appears to be erroneous. In the Marye’s Heights/Willis Hill area, the Marye’s Heights earthworks (#FR0150) are identified as contributing, while the Richardson House/Monfort Academy (#FR0151b) and garage (no #) are evaluated as noncontributing (as concurred by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (SHPO) in a letter dated April 27, 2006. Five other resources are evaluated but not owned by the National Park Service: the Willis/Wellford Family Cemetery (#FR0149b) and a manor house called Brompton (#FR0160) are identified as contributing, while three houses (#FR0142) at 522 Willis

Street (#FR0143), 518 Willis Street (#FR0144), and 526 Willis Street (#FR0145) are noncontributing.

The draft documentation also identifies contributing archeological sites in the Sunken Road area. They include the Sunken Road and Walls site (#FR0152b), Martha Stevens House site (#FR0155a), Innis House site (#FR0153b), Ebert House site (#FR0157), Washington Artillery and Willis Plantation Complex (#FR0149a), Howison's Mill complex (#FR0148a), an excavated spring head and structural platform (possibly tent location) and associated berm (#FR0148b), and the Wellford quarry (#FR0148f). Noncontributing archeological sites include the M.G. Willis House site (#FR0149c), Jaqueline Inge House site (#FR0154), an unidentified structure (#FR0149d), Montfort Academy (Richardson House) (#FR0151a), an isolated quarry pit (#FR0148c), and at the Howison's Mill locale an upland impoundment (#FR0148d) and unidentified structure platforms (#FR0148e).

On September 2, 2010, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (SHPO) conducted a preliminary review of the February 2010 draft of the National Register documentation and agreed with its proposed boundaries and list of contributing and noncontributing resources. However, in a letter dated March 9, 2011, the SHPO provided additional comments on the draft and recommended extending the end date of the overall period of significance from 1959 to 1965. Extending the end date, and also revising the historic context "Architecture and Landscape Architecture of the Middle Peninsula (1768-1959)," would recognize post-Civil War resources with architectural significance. Extending the end date would also recognize the monuments and other improvements in the park that resulted from the commemoration of the Civil War Centennial that ended in 1965. The SHPO suggested changing the draft's evaluation of post-Civil War buildings and sites from noncontributing to contributing throughout the nomination and re-evaluating the SHPO's previous evaluations of post-Civil War resource ineligibility, where relevant. The March 2011 letter did not identify any specific resources within the Sunken Road landscape on this matter. However, the SHPO's recommendations impact the evaluation of the following resources: the c.1960 visitor center "restroom" (#FR0146e), Martha Stevens Grave Urn (#FR0155b), and the Kirkland Monument (#FR0158). Revisions to the February 2010 draft of the National Register documentation are ongoing.

According to research conducted for this CLI and the categories of National Register documentation outlined in the "CLI Professional Procedures Guide," the proposed areas and periods of significance for Sunken Road landscape are within the overall areas and periods of significance proposed in the draft National Register documentation that received concurrence from the SHPO on September 2, 2010 and March 9, 2011. The proposed documentation also adequately describes the site's numerous historic resources that contribute to its significance. Therefore, for purposes of the CLI, the Sunken Road landscape is considered "SHPO-Documented." Although the SHPO recommended extending the overall period of significance to acknowledge 1960s commemorative efforts and revising one of the context themes to address post-Civil War architecture, an evaluation of architectural significance is beyond the scope of this cultural landscape inventory.

**Eligibility:** Eligible -- SHPO Consensus Determination

**Concurrence Eligibility Date:** 03/09/2011

**Concurrence Narrative:**

**Significance Level:** National

**Contributing:** Contributing

**Classification:** District

**Statement of Significance for National Register of Historic Places:**

## FREDERICKSBURG AND SPOTSYLVANIA NATIONAL MILITARY PARK

In the February 2010 draft of the National Register documentation, the park's individual historic resources are evaluated within specific periods of significance of three historic themes (and two subthemes). The park's overall period of significance begins in 1768 with the start of construction of Chatham Manor. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources (SHPO) has recommended extending the end date to 1965, for post-Civil War architectural resources and for monuments and other improvements in the park associated with the nation's commemoration of the Civil War Centennial that ended that year.

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park is nationally significant under National Register Criteria A in Military History and D in Archeology within the context "Civil War Military Action around Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Court House (1862-1865)," for its recurring role in the American Civil War as a theater of military action and for its potential to yield archeological information about the associated battles. The park is nationally significant under National Register Criterion A and meets Criteria Considerations D and F, within the context "Shaping the Battlefield Park Landscape, subtheme Memorialization and Commemoration on the Battlefields (1865-1942), for its important role in the memorialization and commemoration efforts carried out by Civil War veterans, citizens, and the federal government. The park is also nationally significant under National Register Criterion A, within the context "Shaping the Battlefield Park Landscape, subtheme Military Park Development by the War Department, Civilian Conservation Corps, and the National Park Service (1927-1965)" for its role in the federal battlefield park development efforts carried out first by the War Department, and continued with the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the 1930s, and by the National Park Service. Several of the cultural resources preserved within the park are significant on the state level under National Register Criterion C within the context "Architecture and Landscape Architecture of the Middle Peninsula (1768-1965)," as outstanding architectural examples from the antebellum plantation period in Virginia with elements of landscape architecture from late 18th century and early 20th century design traditions.

## SUNKEN ROAD LANDSCAPE

Based on the February 2010 draft of the National Register documentation for the park, the Sunken Road landscape is significant under National Register Criterion A for its association with historic events, Criterion C for its examples of pre-Civil War and Colonial Revival design traditions, and Criterion D for its potential to yield information important to history. Within the overall period of significance for the park (1768-1965), the Sunken Road landscape's period of significance is 1862-1965, which begins with the First Battle of Fredericksburg, and ends with the dedication of the Kirkland Monument, which coincided with the conclusion of commemorative activities associated with the 100-year anniversary of the end of the Civil War.

In the area of military history, the Sunken Road landscape is significant for its role in the American Civil War as a theater of military action and for its potential to yield archeological information about the associated battles. In the area of commemoration, the Sunken Road landscape is significant for its role in the memorialization efforts undertaken by Civil War veterans and citizens and its role in the federal battlefield park development efforts carried out by the War Department and the National Park Service, including the area work by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the 1930s. In the area of architecture, the seventeenth-century Innis house and the Fredericksburg are recognized for their design styles. In the area of archeology, the Sunken Road landscape may yield further information about the battles.

National Register Criterion A and Criterion D: "Civil War Military Action around Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Court House (1862-1865)."

The Sunken Road Landscape is nationally significant for its association with the events of the American Civil War. It was the site of direct conflict on two separate occasions as the Union Army of the Potomac attempted to push south and west towards the Confederate capitol of Richmond.

Due to its river, road, and rail connections, the town of Fredericksburg was of major strategic importance for north-central Virginia. When the Union Army of the Potomac under General Ambrose Burnside moved

on the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia under General Robert E. Lee in early December 1862, the Union forces approaching Fredericksburg from the east possessed superior numbers but were at a logistical disadvantage. The topography of the Fredericksburg area, with the Rappahannock River to the east and an extended ridgeline to the west, offered an exceptionally good defensive position for the Confederate forces.

The First Battle of Fredericksburg commenced on December 11, with Union troops crossing the Rappahannock via pontoon bridges, under heavy fire, to take control of the town. Fighting resumed December 13, with Union infantry moving on the Confederate-controlled ridgeline west and south of town. The Union flank targeting the portion of the ridgeline known as Marye's Heights had to cross nearly a mile of open plain, which terminated at a road running along the base of the heights. This road was called Telegraph Road, and was cut partially into the hillside and worn down from long use, resulting in a "sunken" position in relation to the plain to the east. Confederate infantry were stationed in the ready-made shelter trench created by this "sunken road" and the stone wall which ran along its eastern side, and artillery were stationed on Marye's Heights above. A small valley on the southwest side of Marye's Heights provided shelter for Confederate supply lines and reserve troops. After a long, ill-considered series of futile charges toward the stone wall, Union forces were defeated in a battle so lopsided it was called later called butchery.

While not of major strategic import, the battle at the Sunken Road on December 13 had a profound psychological impact on both sides of the conflict. The overwhelming victory for the Confederates boosted morale, and set up General Lee as the great hope of the Confederate war effort. On the Union side, the devastating loss led to an intensifying of public debate on the course of the war and the wisdom of pursuing emancipation. It also resulted in changes in command, as the disgraced Burnside was replaced by Joseph Hooker as Major General of the Army of the Potomac. When battle came to Fredericksburg again on May 3, 1863 as part of the larger Chancellorsville Campaign, Union forces led by Maj. General John Sedgwick were more cautious. By this point the Confederate army was widely dispersed. The defensive positions atop Marye's Heights and along the Sunken Road were enhanced, but against Confederate Maj. Gen. Jubal A. Early's reduced numbers, Sedgwick was able to capture Marye's Heights in what became known as the Second Battle of Fredericksburg.

Features identified in the February 2010 draft of the National Register documentation as contributing for this context include the rehabilitated Sunken Road (#FR0152a), the original portion of the Stone Wall (#FR0152d) as well as the Sunken Road reconstructed wall (#FR0152c), the Innis house (#FR0153a), and the Marye's Heights earthworks (#FR0150). Archeological resources identified in the February 2010 draft as contributing under Criterion D include the Washington Artillery and Willis Plantation Complex (#FR0149a), Sunken Road and Walls site (#FR0152b), Innis House site (#FR0153b), Martha Stevens House site (#FR0155a), Ebert House site (#FR0157), Howison's Mill Complex (#FR0148a), the Wellford Quarry (#FR0148f) and another Quarry Pit (#FR0148c), and a Springhead and Structural Features (#FR0148a) in the Howison's Mill area.

National Register Criterion A: "Shaping the Battlefield Park Landscape, subtheme Memorialization and Commemoration on the Battlefields (1865-1965)."

The Sunken Road landscape is nationally significant for its role in memorialization and commemoration efforts carried out by Civil War veterans and citizens at the turn of the twentieth century. In the four decades prior to the creation of the park in 1927, veterans' groups and others erected numerous individual monuments on the battlefields of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, The Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Courthouse. Two of these monuments were placed within the Sunken Road landscape. By 1888, a monument was erected along the Sunken Road at the foot of Marye's Heights to Confederate General Thomas Cobb, who had fallen in defense of the stone wall during the First Battle of Fredericksburg. In 1913, a monument was placed by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) at the site along Sunken Road where local resident Martha Stevens was reported to have tended both Union and Confederate soldiers during the First Battle of Fredericksburg.

Features identified in the February 2010 draft of the National Register documentation as contributing for this context include the Cobb Monument (#FR0161), Martha Steven stone (#FR0155c), and Battle of Fredericksburg UDC marker (#FR0156). The draft currently lists the Martha Stevens Grave Urn

(#FR0155b) and the Kirkland Monument (#FR0158) as noncontributing. However, these resources relate to the memorialization and commemoration efforts that took place in the 1960s, events identified as significant by the SHPO. Therefore, this CLI considers them as contributing resources.

National Register Criterion A: "Shaping the Battlefield Park Landscape, subtheme Military Park Development by the War Department, Civilian Conservation Corps, and the National Park Service (1927-1965)."

The Sunken Road landscape is nationally significant for its role in the development of the national military park system begun under the War Department and continued under the National Park Service. Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County National Battlefields Memorial was established in 1927 under the War Department. In 1933 the military parks were transferred to the National Park Service as part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's reorganization of the executive branch, and the park became Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park.

Whereas early battlefield preservation efforts focused on memorialization of the fallen soldiers by their comrades, the military parks reflected an increasing focus on commemoration and interpretation of the battles for a public that had not experienced them personally. President Roosevelt channeled money into the park system through a variety of work relief programs, and the design of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park landscape and facilities are important examples from the 1930s and 1940s Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and National Park Service period of development. Marye's Heights/Sunken Road was chosen as the location for a central park museum and administrative building, which was built in 1935-1936. The National Park Service design plan of the time dictated that park buildings should blend with the natural environment, which in Fredericksburg's case was urban and suburban, with many buildings dating to the nineteenth century. The visitor center was built of brick and concrete in a Colonial Revival design, imitating the architectural styles popular during the first half of the nineteenth century in Virginia. A nearby maintenance garage was also designed to blend in with the urban landscape. The grounds were planted by the Civilian Conservation Corps with native trees and "oldtime" shrubs. In 1939 the Civilian Conservation Corps completed work on the visitor center landscape with the reconstruction of the famous Sunken Road stone wall along the west side of the park property. In the late 1950s through mid-1960s, the park installed interpretive signage along the side of the Sunken Road, and around 1964 expanded its holdings with the purchase of a half-acre parcel north of the original visitor center development.

Features identified in the February 2010 draft National Register documentation as contributing under for this context include the Fredericksburg Visitors Center (#FR0146d), Fredericksburg CCC Maintenance Building (#FR0146c), Fredericksburg Visitors Center Entrance Loop (#FR146a), and Fredericksburg Visitor Center Walkways (#FR0146b). The status of the visitor center restrooms (#FR0146e) is currently undetermined.

National Register Criterion C: "Architecture and Landscape Architecture of the Middle Peninsula (1768-1965)."

The February 2010 draft of the National Register documentation identifies the Innis house and Fredericksburg visitor center as contributing resources within the Sunken Road landscape under this theme. The Innis house (#FR0153a) is described as an intact small frame dwelling at Marye's Heights from the pre-war period. The house is cited as an example of the region's generally conservative architectural expression. The Fredericksburg Battlefield visitors center (#FR0146d) is described as an example of park architecture of the 1930s, reflecting Virginia Colonial Revival architectural style with brick construction and white trim, juxtaposed with the natural rustic landscape embodied by National Park Service roads and bridges. Documentation of the significance of other resources in the area of architecture is beyond the scope of this CLI.

**National Register Significance Criteria:**

- A - Associated with events significant to broad patterns of our history
- C - Embodies distinctive construction, work of master, or high artistic values
- D - Has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history

**National Register Criteria Consideration:**

**National Register Periods of Significance (with Historic Context Themes):**

**Time Period:** CE 1862 - CE 1965

| Historic Context Theme          | Subtheme               | Facet                                      | Other Facet |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Expressing Cultural Values      | Architecture           | Period Revivals (1870-1940)                |             |
| Expressing Cultural Values      | Architecture           | Vernacular Architecture                    |             |
| Expressing Cultural Values      | Landscape Architecture | The 1930's: Era Of Public Works            |             |
| Shaping the Political Landscape | The Civil War          | Battles In The North And South             |             |
| Transforming the Environment    | Historic Preservation  | The Federal Government Enters The Movement |             |

**Area of Significance:**

**Area of Significance Category:** Architecture

**Area of Significance Subcategory:**

**Explanatory Narrative:**

**Area of Significance Category:** Archeology

**Area of Significance Subcategory:**

**Explanatory Narrative:**

**Area of Significance Category:** Military

**Area of Significance Subcategory:**

**Explanatory Narrative:**

**Area of Significance Category:** Other

**Area of Significance Subcategory:**

**Explanatory Narrative:** Commemoration

**Area of Significance Category:** Other

**Area of Significance Subcategory:**

**Explanatory Narrative:** Memorialization

**NRIS Information:**

**NRIS ID:** 66000046

**Other Name:** [F & S] National Military Park

**Primary Certification Date:** 10/15/1966

**State Register Documentation:**

**Identification Number:** 111-0147

**Name:** Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County  
Battlefields Memorial National Military Park and  
Cemetery

**Listed Date:** 01/16/1973

**National Historic Landmarks:**

**National Historic Landmark?** No

**Theme:**

**Contributing:**

**NHL ID:**

**NHL URL:**

**Date:**

**Statement of Significance for National Historic Landmark:**

**World Heritage Site:**

**World Heritage Site?** No

**Category:**

**WHS ID:**

**WHS URL:**

**Date:**

**Is Resource within a designated National Natural Landscape:** No

## Chronology and Physical History

### Chronology:

| Year           | Event            | Major Event Narrative                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BCE *          | Inhabited        | Eastern Virginia is inhabited by indigenous peoples.                                                                                                                                            |
| CE 1671        | Settled          | John Buckner and Thomas Royston patent the Lease Land Grant, comprising 2000 acres within Spotsylvania County. Forty colonists are brought in, and the young community is known as "Leaseland." |
| CE 1727        | Established      | Fredericksburg is established as a port for Spotsylvania County.                                                                                                                                |
| CE 1725 - 1735 | Built            | Around this time a county road is built connecting the waterfront south of the city center to the interior of the county.                                                                       |
| CE 1734        | Purchased/Sold   | Henry Willis acquires the 929-acre Willis Hill parcel, including the small valley to the west of the hill, from Robert Buckner.                                                                 |
| CE 1735 - 1750 | Built            | An informal road trace runs through the Willis property, branching north off of the county road, curving around the base of the hill before heading east to town.                               |
| CE 1740        | Land Transfer    | Ownership of the Willis Hill Parcel passes to Lewis Willis.                                                                                                                                     |
| CE 1740 - 1800 | Mined            | Lewis Willis operates a sandstone quarry on the southwest slope of Willis Hill.                                                                                                                 |
| CE 1740 - 1749 | Farmed/Harvested | Around this time the Willis Hill parcel is put into use as a working farm, with an overseer and slaves possibly in residence.                                                                   |
| CE 1740 - 1756 | Built            | The one-acre family cemetery atop Willis Hill established.                                                                                                                                      |
| CE 1779 - 1780 | Developed        | Lewis Willis builds a home and support structures on Willis Hill.                                                                                                                               |
| CE 1796        | Purchased/Sold   | Lewis Willis sells 1.25- acre parcel near the Hazel Run to Fontaine Maury and John Lewis. The deed includes reference to a quarry operated by Mr. Willis near the mill site.                    |
| CE 1797 - 1798 | Developed        | Maury & Lewis construct a mill complex including a three-story grist mill, a dam along the Hazel Run, a mill race, and associated race road.                                                    |
| CE 1799        | Purchased/Sold   | John Drummond purchases 118 acres from Fontane Maury including the mill complex on the Hazel Run.                                                                                               |
| CE 1805        | Land Transfer    | The Will Hill tract passes from Lewis Willis to B.C.L. Willis.                                                                                                                                  |
| CE 1815 - 1821 | Land Transfer    | Ownership of the Hazel Run mill passes to Edmond Penn and his wife, heirs of the Drummond family.                                                                                               |
| CE 1817        | Destroyed        | The Willis Hill complex is destroyed by fire. Willis family moves to Fredericksburg.                                                                                                            |
| CE 1821        | Purchased/Sold   | Willis Hill Parcel is part of 182-acre tract sold to John S. Wellford and Robert S. Chew.                                                                                                       |
| CE 1821 - 1825 | Built            | Around this time several new structures are built atop Willis Hill.                                                                                                                             |
| CE 1821 - 1847 | Mined            | Quarrying activity is carried out by John Wellford on the southwest slope of Willis Hill.                                                                                                       |

Sunken Road Landscape  
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

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| Year           | Event          | Major Event Narrative                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CE 1821 - 1826 | Built          | The small white cottage later known as the Ebert house is believed to be constructed at the northeast foot of Willis Hill.                                                                                          |
| CE 1821 - 1830 | Built          | Around this time the stone walls along the road at the base of Willis Hill are built, likely in phases. They are composed primarily of sandstone believed to have been quarried from the west slope of Willis Hill. |
| CE 1821 - 1855 | Graded         | Terraces are constructed on the east slope of Willis Hill.                                                                                                                                                          |
| CE 1826        | Purchased/Sold | John S. Wellford and Robert S. Chew purchase the Hazel Run mill complex from the heirs of William Drummond.                                                                                                         |
| CE 1830 - 1849 | Built          | Around this time the Stevens house is likely built on the east side of what is today called Sunken Road.                                                                                                            |
| CE 1830 - 1836 | Built          | John Wellford constructs a second mill in the complex along the Hazel Run.                                                                                                                                          |
| CE 1840 - 1850 | Altered        | Around this time the road running along the base of Willis Hill, previously known as the road to Alsop's tavern, becomes known as the Spotsylvania Court House Road after the construction of the courthouse.       |
| CE 1847        | Purchased/Sold | William Wellford sells the Willis Hill parcel to John Howison.                                                                                                                                                      |
| CE 1850 - 1859 | Altered        | Around this time the Spotsylvania Court House Road becomes known as Telegraph Road.                                                                                                                                 |
| CE 1851        | Established    | The incorporated city limits of Fredericksburg are extended to encompass the west side of today's Willis Street.                                                                                                    |
| CE 1854        | Purchased/Sold | John Howison sells 18 acres atop Willis Hill to William M. Mitchell. The parcel is at the time devoid of structural improvements.                                                                                   |
| CE 1854        | Purchased/Sold | John Howison sells 100 acres including the land on the east side of Telegraph Road to a group headed by Thomas Manuel.                                                                                              |
| CE 1855        | Purchased/Sold | Thomas Manuel & Co. sell an unspecified number of acres east of Telegraph Road to Absalom McGee. The sale includes the small white cottage at the base of Marye's Hill that would become known as the Ebert house.  |
| CE 1856        | Purchased/Sold | Joseph Hall purchases a parcel along Telegraph Road across from the southern end of Willis Hill from Thomas Manuel & Co.                                                                                            |
| CE 1856 - 1861 | Built          | Around this time the Innis house is built along Telegraph Road near the base of the ravine between Willis Hill and Marye's Hill.                                                                                    |
| CE 1857        | Built          | William Mitchell makes improvements on the 18-acre Willis Hill parcel, believed to include a small brick cottage and two brick dependencies.                                                                        |
| CE 1857        | Destroyed      | The mill dam on Hazel Run is destroyed twice by flood.                                                                                                                                                              |
| CE 1858        | Purchased/Sold | Henry Ebert purchases the 1-acre lot and house at the bend in Telegraph Road from Absalom and Frances McGee.                                                                                                        |
| CE 1860        | Purchased/Sold | Douglas H. Gordon purchases the 18-acre Willis Hill parcel after it is put up for public auction.                                                                                                                   |

Sunken Road Landscape  
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

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| Year           | Event              | Major Event Narrative                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CE 1861        | Purchased/Sold     | Martha Stevens (known legally by the name Martha Innis) purchases the land on which she and her family have been living along Telegraph Road from A.P. Rowe.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| CE 1862        | Military Operation | First Battle of Fredericksburg, December 13. Military improvements are made in the area of Telegraph Road prior to and during the battle, including lunettes on Willis Hill and Marye's Hill. A narrow road is cut into the west slope of Willis Hill, running past the mill between Telegraph Road and the crest of the hill near the Willis family cemetery. |
| CE 1863        | Military Operation | Battle of Chancellorsville/ Second Battle of Fredericksburg, May 3. A slit trench is added to Telegraph Road. A series of rifle pits and shelter trenches are added to the crest of Willis Hill, and a horseshoe-shaped earthwork.                                                                                                                             |
| CE 1863 - 1864 | Demolished         | The Joseph Hall house and associated structures are demolished.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| CE 1864        | Destroyed          | All structures on Willis Hill are in a state of ruin.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| CE 1865        | Established        | Civil War ends. Southern portion of Willis Hill is designated a National Cemetery.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| CE 1865 - 1878 | Built              | Joseph Hall constructs a new home on his property.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| CE 1866        | Planned            | The Federal Government lays out the boundaries of the Fredericksburg National Cemetery. A builders platform is constructed along the northern boundary of the cemetery which extends up to fifteen feet into the remaining Willis Hill acreage. The remnants of the Willis Hill buildings are believed to have been obliterated at this time.                  |
| CE 1867        | Land Transfer      | The mill on Hazel Run passes from John Howison to Robert R. Howison. Repairs to the mill are likely carried out at around this time.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| CE 1867 - 1869 | Altered            | The Burial Corps working on Fredericksburg National Cemetery sets up camp on Joseph Hall's land. They salvage the remnants of the foundation of Hall's house, as well as apparently dismantling and reusing a portion of the stone wall on his property.                                                                                                       |
| CE 1868        | Purchased/Sold     | Twelve acres of land for the Fredericksburg National Cemetery is formally transferred from Douglas H. Gordon to the Federal Government.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| CE 1871        | Purchased/Sold     | Robert Howison sells the mill complex to J.C. Brent.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| CE 1877        | Land Transfer      | The remaining 11.5 acres of Willis Hill are sold to Taylor Berry (as trustee for Helen B. Lane, living at Brompton).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| CE 1880 - 1886 | Demolished         | Sections of the original stone wall along Telegraph Road are removed. Only about one-hundred-fifty feet of the wall remain on the east side of the road, between the Innis and Ebert houses.                                                                                                                                                                   |
| CE 1881 - 1893 | Built              | Utility lines mounted on tall wooden poles are installed along Telegraph Road.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| CE 1882        | Purchased/Sold     | The 11.5-acre Willis Hill parcel is conveyed to Colonel Charles Richardson.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

Sunken Road Landscape  
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

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| Year           | Event          | Major Event Narrative                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CE 1882 - 1889 | Built          | Improvements are made to Richardson's property on Willis Hill, believed to include the construction of the existing house. Landscape work at this time included the substantial removal of military trenches and other remnants of the battle. |
| CE 1887 - 1888 | Memorialized   | The General Thomas Cobb Monument is erected on the west side of Telegraph Road, across from the Stevens house.                                                                                                                                 |
| CE 1890        | Destroyed      | The dam on the Hazel Run breaks, destroying the mill pond and drying up the mill race.                                                                                                                                                         |
| CE 1894        | Destroyed      | The mill on the Hazel Run is destroyed by fire.                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| CE 1897        | Purchased/Sold | The 11.5-acre Willis Hill parcel sold by George Fitzhugh to Henry G. Chesley who then sells it to William D. Richardson (unrelated to Charles Richardson). Occupation status is uncertain.                                                     |
| CE 1906        | Purchased/Sold | The Willis Hill parcel is sold by William D. Richardson to John L. Williams.                                                                                                                                                                   |
| CE 1912        | Built          | A second house is added to the former Stevens property.                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| CE 1913        | Destroyed      | The Martha Stevens house is destroyed by fire.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| CE 1917        | Memorialized   | A granite memorial stone is erected on the site of the Stevens house by the United Daughters of the Confederacy.                                                                                                                               |
| CE 1917        | Purchased/Sold | The 11.5-acre Willis Hill parcel conveyed to J. Elton Aldrich. Occupation status is uncertain.                                                                                                                                                 |
| CE 1917 - 1919 | Built          | Around this time a new house is constructed just northwest of the original Stevens house.                                                                                                                                                      |
| CE 1919 - 1927 | Altered        | The portion of Telegraph Road running along Marye's Heights becomes officially known as Sunken Road.                                                                                                                                           |
| CE 1919 - 1927 | Demolished     | Around this time the second Hall house is removed and a gas station built on the site.                                                                                                                                                         |
| CE 1927        | Established    | The Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial is established by Congress under the U.S. War Department.                                                                                                                     |
| CE 1927        | Memorialized   | The United Daughters of the Confederacy donates a monument that is placed at the intersection of the Sunken Road and Hanover St.                                                                                                               |
| CE 1928 - 1933 | Built          | The War department installs a series of metal ID plaques, approx. 1'x2', as part of the development of the battlefield sites as a public park. Plaques mark significant strategic positions and direct visitors to sites of military interest. |
| CE 1929 - 1931 | Altered        | Roadwork where U.S. Highway 1 (formerly Telegraph Road) crosses the Hazel Run buries the archaeological remains of Howison's Mill under tons of fill.                                                                                          |
| CE 1931        | Land Transfer  | The City of Fredericksburg deeds the land for its portion of the Sunken Road to the park, but retains a right-of-way.                                                                                                                          |
| CE 1932        | Purchased/Sold | The 11.5-acre Willis Hill parcel is conveyed to Myra O. Aldrich (Mrs. Lawrence Reed).                                                                                                                                                          |
| CE 1933        | Established    | President Franklin D. Roosevelt transfers the park from the War Department to the National Park Service.                                                                                                                                       |

Sunken Road Landscape  
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

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| Year           | Event          | Major Event Narrative                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CE 1930 - 1934 | Purchased/Sold | Around this time the U.S. government acquires 2.23-acres on the corner of Telegraph Road and Lafayette Boulevard.                                                                                                                                                          |
| CE 1935 - 1937 | Built          | Fredericksburg Visitor Center and an associated maintenance building are built at the corner of Sunken Road and Lafayette Boulevard. Construction includes an entrance loop and brick walkways. Extensive excavation for the basement destroys the site of the Hall house. |
| CE 1936 - 1931 | Land Transfer  | Spotsylvania County deeds the land for its portion of the Sunken Road to the park, but retains a right-of-way.                                                                                                                                                             |
| CE 1937 - 1939 | Planted        | The Civilian Conservation Corps installs a variety of native trees and shrubs throughout the visitor center landscape.                                                                                                                                                     |
| CE 1937        | Purchased/Sold | The 11.5-acre Willis Hill parcel is purchased by W.C. Spratt.                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| CE 1937 - 1960 | Mined          | Quarrying activity results in significant cuts into the southwest slope of Willis Hill below the National Cemetery.                                                                                                                                                        |
| CE 1938        | Established    | Willis Hill and the Howison's Mill site are annexed to the City of Fredericksburg.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| CE 1939        | Reconstructed  | The Civilian Conservation Corps reconstructs a 470-foot section of the stone walls along the east side of Sunken Road.                                                                                                                                                     |
| CE 1940        | Built          | The park installs a pair of monolithic brick entry signs and a flagpole in front the visitor center facing Lafayette Boulevard.                                                                                                                                            |
| CE 1946        | Purchased/Sold | The University of Mary Washington (then Mary Washington College) purchased the property containing the battlefield landmark Brompton.                                                                                                                                      |
| CE 1948        | Purchased/Sold | W.C. Spratt conveys 8.3 acres of the Willis Hill tract to Daughters of Wisdom, Inc. The remainder of the 11.5-acre tract is sold to Suzanne C. Williams.                                                                                                                   |
| CE 1948        | Built          | The Daughters of Wisdom found Montfort Academy, constructing a two-story school building west of the Richardson House.                                                                                                                                                     |
| CE 1948 - 1955 | Built          | Around this time a stone gateway is constructed on the Sunken Road at the rear entrance to the Brompton property.                                                                                                                                                          |
| CE 1957        | Demolished     | The Ebert house is razed, having been vacant for an unknown number of years.                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| CE 1958 - 1965 | Built          | The park installs interpretive signage along Sunken Road, including large narrative markers and a painting depicting the battle.                                                                                                                                           |
| CE 1960 - 1965 | Memorialized   | Around this time the Martha Stevens grave urn is installed by the Stevens family.                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| CE 1960        | Altered        | A new one-story wing is added onto the west side of the main Montfort Academy school building.                                                                                                                                                                             |
| CE 1960        | Altered        | A six-inch water main is extended down the entire length of the east side of Sunken Road from Lafayette Blvd. northward.                                                                                                                                                   |
| CE 1961        | Paved          | Sunken Road is paved over with asphalt.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

Sunken Road Landscape  
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

| Year           | Event          | Major Event Narrative                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CE 1958 - 1965 | Built          | The park installs interpretive signage along Sunken Road, including large narrative markers and a painting depicting the battle.                                                               |
| CE 1963        | Purchased/Sold | The parcel of land on which the Ebert house and store once stood is acquired by developer Russell Sullivan with the intention of constructing an apartment complex.                            |
| CE 1963 - 1964 | Purchased/Sold | The park acquires a 0.5-acre lot just north of the visitor center property.                                                                                                                    |
| CE 1964        | Purchased/Sold | The University of Mary Washington purchases the Ebert house parcel from Russell Sullivan.                                                                                                      |
| CE 1965        | Memorialized   | The Kirkland Monument is dedicated. The stone wall at the corner of Kirkland St. is altered to accommodate the construction of an ornamental entranceway using stone from the wall.            |
| CE 1965 - 1979 | Altered        | Around this time Kirkland Street is converted to a dead-end street terminating at the eastern edge of the Ebert house site.                                                                    |
| CE 1969        | Land Transfer  | The park acquires the Innis house property and the Martha Stevens house site.                                                                                                                  |
| CE 1969 - 1970 | Demolished     | The park demolishes three twentieth century houses on its property along Sunken Road.                                                                                                          |
| CE 1972        | Altered        | The City of Fredericksburg designates Sunken Road as a one-way road, limited to southbound traffic.                                                                                            |
| CE 1972        | Altered        | The park expands the visitor parking lot and pedestrian walkways surrounding the visitor center.                                                                                               |
| CE 1974        | Platted        | The park's boundary is defined by a Congressional boundary study committee to include all parcels along the Sunken Road between Lafayette Boulevard and Hanover Street.                        |
| CE 1977        | Purchased/Sold | The park acquires the parcel at the southeast corner of Sunken Road and Hanover Street.                                                                                                        |
| CE 1977        | Rehabilitated  | The park rehabilitates the Innis house, including removal of a non-historic shed addition.                                                                                                     |
| CE 1979        | Preserved      | A five-foot long segment of the original stone wall along the eastern side of Sunken Road collapses and is reset by the park.                                                                  |
| CE 1985        | Altered        | The park adds a wheelchair ramp at the front entrance to the visitor center on Lafayette Boulevard.                                                                                            |
| CE 1987        | Rehabilitated  | The Innis house is rehabilitated with the removal of a non-historic porch and clapboard siding, the replacement of damaged siding, and the reconstruction of exterior shutters on the windows. |
| CE 1987        | Land Transfer  | The University of Mary Washington conveys the Ebert house parcel, containing the Kirkland Monument, to the park.                                                                               |
| CE 1987 - 1990 | Planted        | The park installs a low hedge around the Kirkland Monument.                                                                                                                                    |

Sunken Road Landscape  
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

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| Year           | Event          | Major Event Narrative                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CE 1989        | Established    | The park's legislative boundary is officially defined and encompasses all tracts on either side of Sunken Road between Lafayette Boulevard and Hanover Street, as well as the west side of Willis Street and the Howison's Mill area. |
| CE 1990        | Altered        | Sunken Road is reduced to a single vehicular lane, with a pedestrian pathway on the eastern half, separated by a split-rail fence.                                                                                                    |
| CE 1990        | Restored       | The park restores the Civilian Conservation Corps-built reconstructed stone wall.                                                                                                                                                     |
| CE 1991 - 2001 | Purchased/Sold | The park acquires all but three of the parcels on the west side of Willis Street.                                                                                                                                                     |
| CE 1991 - 1992 | Built          | The park demolishes a gas station at the corner of Willis Street and Lafayette Boulevard and constructs an auxiliary bus parking lot.                                                                                                 |
| CE 1992 - 1993 | Rehabilitated  | The former maintenance building behind the visitor center is converted to a bookstore and gift shop.                                                                                                                                  |
| CE 1994        | Preserved      | A four-foot long segment of the original stone wall along the eastern side of Sunken Road collapses and is reset by the park.                                                                                                         |
| CE 1997        | Land Transfer  | The 8.52 acre Montfort Academy property is transferred to the Civil War Trust, which quickly transfers ownership to the park.                                                                                                         |
| CE 1998        | Demolished     | Montfort Academy structures are removed, with the exception of the Richardson house and a garage.                                                                                                                                     |
| CE 2003 - 2005 | Demolished     | The park demolishes all twentieth century houses on its Willis Street parcels.                                                                                                                                                        |
| CE 2004        | Reconstructed  | The segment of the east stone wall between the Innis house and the Stevens house site is reconstructed.                                                                                                                               |
| CE 2004 - 2005 | Rehabilitated  | After the city of Fredericksburg gives up its right-of-way, the park removes pavement from the segment of the Sunken Road between Lafayette Boulevard and Hanover Street and restores its historic earthen appearance.                |

**Physical History:**

The following section provides information on the physical development and evolution of the site, organized by time periods.

## EARLY SETTLEMENT OF FREDERICKSBURG

Eastern Virginia was first settled approximately 17,000 years ago by hunter-gatherer peoples who came to the area following the migratory patterns of animals. By the time English colonists arrived in 1607, these Woodland cultures had coalesced into a variety of tribal groups, with different tribes occupying the various geophysical regions.

Present-day Fredericksburg is situated just downstream from where the Rappahannock River passes through a transitional geological zone running through eastern Virginia known as the “fall line.” Here the sturdy metamorphic rock of the Virginia Piedmont gives way to the softer sedimentary rock of the coastal plain, resulting in small waterfalls along the region’s rivers. Upstream from the fall line, the piedmont was dominated by Siouan-speaking tribes who lived in small independent villages, practicing both hunting and gathering as well as subsistence agriculture. Downstream of the fall line, a number of Algonquin-speaking tribes were allied under the powerful Powhatan Confederacy, and practiced a sophisticated form of agriculture in the rich lands of the coastal plain. In the early seventeenth century, a village of the small Siouan-speaking Manahoc tribe is believed to have been located near present-day Fredericksburg, in this transitional zone for both geology and culture. By 1669, the Manahoc tribe had essentially disappeared, though the village, known as Mahaskahod, may have continued to be used periodically as a hunting camp by Algonquin groups from downstream.

The exact date of the first English settlement at Fredericksburg is uncertain, but the city’s birth is often dated to 1671, when the colonial governor granted two-thousand acres along the Rappahannock River to John Buckner and Thomas Royston of Gloucester County. The settlement of “Leaseland” began approximately one mile downstream from Rappahannock Falls. These small falls marked the upper limits of the navigable portion of the river, making it a strategically-important location for the development of regional commerce. In 1727, fifty acres along the river were purchased from Robert Buckner and John Royston, the heirs of the original Leaseland patent holders. The newly-formalized settlement on the Rappahannock received its charter under the name Fredericksburg, in honor of Frederick Prince of Wales.

The fifty acres comprising Fredericksburg were surveyed and platted into sixty-four small lots and a town square, and the community is shown on early maps as a compact grid hugging the western edge of the Rappahannock River. Sale of these lots was slow, as newcomers to the region gravitated instead to the tobacco lands to the west. By the mid-1730s, thanks to new regulations for the colonial tobacco trade and the relocation of the Spotsylvania County seat from Germana, Fredericksburg had begun to develop as a center of commerce and trade, although many of the downtown lots remained unsold.

In 1734, Buckner sold his half of the remaining Leaseland patent lands to Henry Willis, a younger son of a prominent coastal family who had set out to make a name for himself in the frontier. By the time he settled in Spotsylvania County in 1729, Willis had won a seat on the county court, represented the county in the House of Burgesses, and been named one of seven trustees for the town of Fredericksburg in its chartering legislation. Willis owned a number of lots downtown, both along the public square and along the waterfront, where he built the town’s first public tobacco warehouses, as well as the public wharf and ferry. The 929-acre parcel he acquired from Buckner extended southwest from the edge of town, encompassing a small plain that rose gently for approximately a quarter-mile before rising more steeply into overlooking heights. While the Willis family continued to reside in Fredericksburg, part of the property was developed for agriculture. Possibly as early as 1735, the Willis family is believed to have built a road or farm lane through their property, branching north off a county road to the south that had been built c. 1730. This road wrapped around the southern end of the heights, which became known as Willis Hill, and traveled north along its base before turning east into Fredericksburg. The road track would be known by a number of names over the years, including the road to Alsop’s tavern, Spotsylvania Courthouse Road, and Telegraph Road, but today the portion running along the base of the heights and which is under National Park Service management is known as Sunken Road.

When Henry Willis died in 1740, ownership of Willis Hill passed to his son Lewis, who continued to live for many years in Fredericksburg. Lewis Willis maintained a portion of the property in active agriculture, and an overseer and slaves may have been in residence as early as 1747. A family cemetery was established atop the hill, and was in use by 1756, but it was not until around 1780 that Lewis Willis built a home and associated support structures on Willis Hill. He also established a sandstone quarry on the southwestern slope of the hill, near a stream called the Hazel Run.

Fielding Lewis, another younger son from a prominent Gloucester County family, acquired the remainder of the original Leaseland patent lands from the Royston family in 1752. The shape of Lewis's property mirrored that of the Willis tract to the south, running southwest from the edge of town and encompassing stretches of both the plain and the heights above. The shared boundary of the Willis and Lewis tracts is believed to have run approximately along the current location of Kirkland Street.

## PRE-CIVIL WAR DEVELOPMENT AROUND THE SUNKEN ROAD

Fredericksburg was incorporated as a town in 1781, with a mayor, council, board of aldermen, and its own courts, but the town was in a stagnant economic situation. For many years its economy had been dependent upon the processing and distribution of the tobacco grown on nearby plantations. While Fredericksburg sustained no physical damage during the Revolutionary War, the conflict destroyed many of the maritime connections upon which the region's tobacco trade depended. This precipitated an effort to diversify the local economy through a greater investment in other agricultural products, including staple grains such as corn and wheat. Some plantations built their own mills to process their grain harvest, but independent mills were also established to serve the general public. Around 1797, one such mill was constructed by Fontaine Maury and John Lewis on a one-and-three-quarter-acre tract purchased from Lewis Willis. The mill was located on the Hazel Run just off the Spotsylvania Courthouse Road (today part of Lafayette Boulevard), in a small valley on the southwest side of Willis Hill. Associated structures built during this period included a dam along the Hazel Run, a mill race built just above the floodplain to channel water eastward to the mill, and a narrow road along the south side of the mill race. No domestic structures are believed to have been built within the complex at this time. The entire complex was sold in 1799 to William Drummond, who offered it up for resale himself just a year later. He was unable to find a buyer, and ownership of the mill complex eventually passed to his heirs.

In 1803, Lewis Willis vacated his home on Willis Hill and moved back to Fredericksburg. The property was transferred to his son, Byrd C. Willis, who occupied the family home on the hill until it and all outbuildings were destroyed by fire in 1817. Willis chose not to rebuild, instead moving his family to Fredericksburg, and in 1821 he sold the property to John S. Wellford and Robert S. Chew. The land acquired by Wellford and Chew totaled 182-acres, and included not only including Willis Hill but part of the plain to the east of the Spotsylvania Courthouse Road. Wellford and Chew continued to maintain Willis Hill as part of a working farm, and acquired the mill on the Hazel Run from William Drummond's heirs. Wellford became sole owner of their joint holdings in the Willis Hill area after Chew's death in 1826.

A number of important developments within the landscape of the Sunken Road area may be traced back to John Wellford, an avid businessman. Although an informal road track likely existed as early as the 1730s, it was during Wellford's time that the stretch of road on the south and east sides of Willis Hill, now called Sunken Road, is believed to have been formalized. The road is first referenced in deeds from the mid- 1820s, and the stone walls running along both sides are believed to date to around 1830. While the walls on the east side of the road were mostly free-standing, those on the west were retaining walls, as the road was cut into the lower slopes of Willis and Marye's Hills by as much as six feet. While no dates for quarrying activity can be confirmed, it is possible that Wellford harvested sandstone from his property as the Willis family had before him. Whether it was freshly-quarried, or seconds that had been lying about for many years, the material for the walls along Spotsylvania Courthouse Road (today Sunken Road) are likely to have originated in the sandstone quarry on the southwest side of Willis Hill. The small white house northeast of Willis Hill, which would be later occupied by the Ebert family during the Civil War, is thought to have been built by Wellford as early as 1826. Around 1836, Wellford also made improvements to the mill complex on the Hazel Run, reportedly including the construction of a second mill building.

By 1851, the countryside surrounding Fredericksburg had acquired enough residents that the town's corporate boundary was extended westward to roughly the location of today's Willis Street. The new boundary fell just short of the foot of Willis Hill and the road at its base, known by then as Telegraph Road (today Sunken Road), although the eponymous telegraph lines did not apparently run along the portion of the road along Willis Hill. In 1852, William Wellford sold 1000-acres to prominent Fredericksburg merchant John Howison. This purchase included Willis Hill, the mill on the Hazel Run, and the farmed plain to the east of Telegraph Road, on which stood the building known as the "White Cottage," which has been speculated to refer to the Ebert House. Just two years after purchasing it, in 1854 Howison sold off most of the property he had acquired in the vicinity of Willis Hill, though he retained the mill property on the Hazel Run and a large tract of land to the south on which he built his home, Braehead. He sold one-hundred acres east of Telegraph Road to a group of

Fredericksburg businessmen, led by Thomas Manuel, who proceeded to subdivide the land. Willis Hill was sold to William Mitchell, with the exception of the one-acre brick-walled cemetery that was retained by the heirs of the Wellford family. At the time, the property was listed as devoid of any structural improvements, and was likely in agricultural use. The graded terraces along the east slope of Willis Hill were present by 1855, although it is not certain that Mitchell initiated their construction, as he was trying to sell the property at the time. They may have been constructed as early as the Willis period of ownership, but there is no documentation. Mitchell's attempts to sell Willis Hill were unsuccessful, and around 1857 he is believed to have built a small brick house atop the hill in which he took up residence. At least one, and possibly two, small brick dependencies were also built nearby. In 1860, the property was put up for public auction and purchased by Douglas H. Gordon, who did not reside there himself but may have maintained slaves and an overseer on the site.

By 1861, the incorporated town of Fredericksburg held a population of approximately 5,000. West of downtown, a small cluster of homes had sprung up in the area where Telegraph Road turned east (along today's Kirkland Street) to meet the Orange Turnpike, or Hanover Street (Figure 1). While some of these homes were within the town limits, they were separated from downtown by farmland and a mill race, or canal ditch, running southeast from the canal north of town. East of the neighborhood lay a ten-acre enclosed fairground that the town had purchased and converted from farmland in 1855. On the southwest fringes of the miniature neighborhood lay Brompton, the centerpiece of the large estate of lawyer John L. Marye. Brompton, or the Marye House, looked out over Fredericksburg from atop a promontory slightly lower than Willis Hill. The extended ridge of which both hills were a part would later come to be known as Marye's Heights, due to Brompton's role as a prominent battlefield landmark.

Below Brompton, where Telegraph Road turned east to merge with Hanover Street, sat the Ebert house (Figure 2). In 1858, Henry Ebert had purchased this small white house on a one-acre corner lot from Abalsom McGee, who had acquired it from Thomas Manuel & Co. The Ebert family ran a small store from the house, and the property is believed to have also held a small barn. The stone retaining wall on the east side of Telegraph Road followed the road as it turned, reaching a height of approximately four feet above the roadbed. There was a gap in the wall where the Ebert house stood, set back slightly from the road and facing north. An informal cart track or secondary road continued north from the bend in Telegraph Road, past the Ebert house to connect with the Orange Turnpike.

Around 300 feet south of the Eberts, the Innis house stood near the corner of an informal track leading east from Telegraph Road to the fairgrounds (Figure 3). This small house was built sometime between 1856 and 1861, and was occupied by John Innis (or Ennis) and his family. The parcel on which it stood was owned by his mother Martha Stevens, who resided 150 feet to the south with her second husband. Mrs. Stevens, who legally went by the surname of her first husband (Innis), had been living along Telegraph Road since as early as c. 1850. While the earliest documentation of the Stevens house is from 1859, the house was of an architectural style common in the 1830s and 1840s (Figure 4). In addition to the house, the Stevens property featured a well and at least two outbuildings, including a barn. Both the Innis and Stevens properties were enclosed by wooden fencing. A break in the Telegraph Road east stone wall was located in front of the Stevens house, and another is believed to have been located just north of the Innis House where the dirt track led to the fairgrounds.

Around 700 feet south of the Stevens house, the Joseph Hall farm stood along Telegraph Road just north of the spot where it began to turn westward around the base of Willis Hill. In addition to the house, the property included an orchard, stable, barn, and corncrib, and was surrounded by a wooden plank fence. Further south and west along Telegraph Road, the mill property on the Hazel Run was still owned by the Howison family. A hired miller and his family resided on the site in a small cottage sited on the hillside just north of the primary mill building (Figure 5).

Telegraph Road, or Spotsylvania Courthouse Road, had by this point been in use for in some form for over one hundred years. The road was the primary route from Fredericksburg to the county courthouse, and beyond to the state capital of Richmond, and the many years of heavy use had compacted and worn down the roadbed. This resulted in a "sunken" character, which was most

pronounced in the area between the Stevens and Ebert houses, where the road had been cut through an alluvial fan landform and was enclosed by stone retaining walls on either side. Freestanding stone walls also enclosed the road on the eastern side from the Stevens house south to the road trace of Frederick Street (today Lafayette Boulevard).



Figure 1. The relationship of Sunken Road to town of Fredericksburg in 1862, as drawn in 1867 for the U.S. Secretary of War. Confederate entrenchments on Dec. 13 are shown in red (Fredericksburg, Nathaniel Michler. Library of Congress).



Figure 2. Looking southeast at the Ebert House and Store, 1927. The white barn to the left may be the same one which stood there during the Civil War (Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park Archives, hereafter "Park Archives").



*Figure 3. Looking south along the Sunken Road towards the Innis and Stevens houses, ca. 1890. The east side of the road largely retains its open character from the time of the battles (Park Archives).*



*Figure 4. Looking southeast at the Martha Stevens House along Sunken Road, ca. 1865. Note the house set back from the road behind a break in the stone wall (Park Archives).*



*Figure 5. Howison's Mill in the small valley on the southwest side of Willis Hill, as seen looking northeast from Telegraph Road (today Lafayette Boulevard) 1865 (Park Archives).*

## THE CIVIL WAR

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, it seemed certain that Fredericksburg would be a major point of conflict between the two armies. The town was situated halfway between Washington, D.C., and the Confederate capitol of Richmond. The road network across central Virginia fed through town, and it was a port community along the strategically-important Rappahannock River which also possessed an established railroad infrastructure. Due to this confluence of factors, Fredericksburg soon became one of the Confederacy's most important logistical bases. A fairgrounds east of Willis Hill and Telegraph Road named Mercer Square was converted into a training and encampment facility for Confederate troops, and became known as Camp Mercer.

### First Battle of Fredericksburg:

In November 1862, the Union Army of the Potomac began to move towards Fredericksburg. General Ambrose Burnside had recently inherited the command after George McClellan was removed from the position following the costly battle at Antietam and his subsequent failure to pursue the Confederates west across the Potomac. In late November, Burnside moved his forces into position on Stafford Heights on the east bank of the Rappahannock, and from there planned to quickly cross the river to take the city. However, the necessary pontoon boats were delayed, and Confederate General Robert E. Lee learned of Burnside's plans and moved his Army of Northern Virginia quickly up from Winchester. On December 11, under a heavy fire, the Army of the Potomac crossed the Rappahannock via three pontoon bridges and took control of downtown Fredericksburg. On December 13, Union forces moved on the fortified heights south and west of town in a two-pronged attack. Marye's Heights was seen as one of the most promising avenues of attack because the terrain between there and the river was less steep than elsewhere, and the proximity of downtown Fredericksburg offered some shelter from which to advance.

The battle of December 13 unfolded in a natural amphitheater formed by the river to the east and the curving ridgeline to the west. This topography provided Lee and the Confederates with an exceptionally good defensive position. Artillery was placed atop Marye's Heights and fortified with earthen lunettes, four of which were located atop Willis Hill. Infantry were stationed at the base of the heights, where the stone wall on the east side of Telegraph Road and the partially-sunken topography of the roadbed created a ready-made shelter trench. The retaining wall on the west side of the road, much of which was only fragments by this time, played no apparent role in the battle.

The houses in the area, evacuated by their inhabitants in advance of the battle, provided additional positions for Confederate sharpshooters.

The small valley around on the southwest side of Willis Hill where Howison's mill was located offered a degree of shelter and ample fresh water from a series of springs, making it an ideal encampment location for Confederate troops. Sometime in the weeks or months leading up to the battle, a narrow military road had been built, or enlarged from an existing trace. This road branched off from Telegraph Road and ran up the back slope of Willis Hill through the valley, providing a relatively secure route for moving Confederate troops and supplies to the fortified heights above. The precise alignment of this military road is unclear; various sources recall it leading up the valley to connect with the Plank Road or Orange Turnpike (today Hanover Street), as well as to the back of the Willis Family cemetery. The cemetery itself served as a makeshift Confederate field hospital, its brick walls providing some protection for injured soldiers.

With the Confederates entrenched upon the high ground, the Union troops had to cross 400 yards uphill with little to no cover, and the large canal ditch (or mill race) which cut diagonally across the plain provided an additional obstacle (Figure 6). No Union soldier advanced to closer than sixty feet from the stone wall, as charge after charge fell on what would come to be called the Bloody Plain. By the end of the First Battle of Fredericksburg, the Army of the Potomac had suffered 12,600 casualties, nearly two thirds of them on December 13 over the course of fourteen individual charges on Marye's Heights. Confederate losses totaled approximately 5,300, one of the most notable being Brig. General Thomas Cobb, who had been in charge of the defense of the stone wall.

#### Second Battle of Fredericksburg:

The second and final major conflict to take place at Fredericksburg during the Civil War came the following spring, in May 1863. The Second Battle of Fredericksburg was part of the Chancellorsville Campaign, most of which unfolded further west of town in Spotsylvania County. Again the landform of Marye's Heights and the stone wall and "sunken road" beneath it played a major role in the fighting. A line of shelter trenches or rifle pits were added atop Willis Hill near the lunettes from the first battle, and a horseshoe-shaped earthwork was constructed on the north slope of the hill, near the ravine which divided the hill from the Brompton property. The defensive position at the stone wall was enhanced with a slit trench and firing platform along the stretch of road between the Ebert house and somewhere in the vicinity of the Hall house (Figure 7). Soil from the trench was reportedly thrown over the stone wall and banked up against its eastern side, possibly contributing to the sunken character of the road in certain areas.

In contrast to the first battle at Fredericksburg, by May of 1863 the Army of Northern Virginia had been divided, with most of its strength located to the west. The troops remaining to defend Fredericksburg were spread out thinly along the ridgeline west of town. With memories of the Bloody Plain still fresh, the Army of the Potomac corps under Major General John Sedgwick proceeded cautiously. On May third, Union troops were finally able to reach the stone wall and take Marye's Heights through the ravine between Willis Hill and Marye's Hill. Although control of Fredericksburg would change hands between Confederate and Union forces a total of seven times during the course of the war, the battle of May third was the last major fighting to touch the city.



Figure 6. Looking west towards Sunken Road and the first Union charge on Marye's Heights on Dec. 13, 1862, as visualized by J.G. Keyser, 1863. The geography depicted is not entirely accurate (Park Archives).



Figure 7. Looking south along Sunken Road at base of Willis Hill following the Second Battle of Fredericksburg, 1863. The Hall House is in the background, near the site of the current visitor center (Park Archives).

## POST-WAR DEVELOPMENT

In the aftermath of the second battle at Marye's Heights, the shelter trenches which had been dug along Telegraph Road were likely quickly filled in, as the road remained an important thoroughfare. Downtown Fredericksburg had sustained heavy damage during the two battles, and the homes along Telegraph Road also suffered to varying degrees. As shown in a series of historic photos, by 1864 the brick structures atop Willis Hill were in ruins, and the Hall house and its outbuildings had been demolished (Figure 8). The Ebert, Innis, and Stevens houses survived the war, as did Brompton to the north, although all sustained damage including numerous bullet holes. The extents of post-war repairs performed on the Innis and Ebert Houses are not certain, but Martha Stevens is reported to have preserved her home's battle scars as a tourist attraction of sorts while she and her family occupied the Stratton house to the east. For a number of years she reportedly farmed the land that had formerly been the fairgrounds and later Camp Mercer.

In July 1865, three months after the cessation of conflict, Congress authorized the establishment of a National Cemetery at Fredericksburg. A twelve-acre location was chosen at Marye's Heights, on the southern end of the top of Willis Hill. While site work began the following year, it was not until 1868 that the twelve acres were formally transferred from Douglas Gordon to the War Department. The Burial Corps that worked on the cemetery set up camp on Joseph Hall's property, where they salvaged the foundation remnants of his house and appear to have dismantled part of the stone wall on the east side of Telegraph Road.

Documentation on changes to the remainder of Willis Hill in the post-war years is scant. In 1866, repairs were made to the small family cemetery, still owned by the Wellford heirs, and burials there resumed. Of the domestic structures that stood atop the hill during the battles, the remnants of at least one are believed to have been removed during site work for the National Cemetery.

Howison's Mill on the Hazel Run, which had sheltered Confederate forces during both battles, had sustained some structural damage from shelling, but appeared relatively intact in a photo from 1865 (see Figure 5). However, Federal troops are believed to have camped here after the second battle at Fredericksburg, and by the time they left all machinery within the mill was reported destroyed. Exactly when the mill resumed operation is not certain, but in 1867 Howison advertised to repair the building. In 1871, a fifteen-acre parcel including the mill was sold to J.C. Brent. Presumably the mill continued operations under Brent, as later property records refer to a "Brent's Mill" in the area.

The 1870s ushered in a number changes to the landscape along what was by then popularly known as "the sunken road," although still officially called Telegraph Road. Sometime after 1868, Joseph Hall built a new home on his property, at the corner of Telegraph Road and the road leading east into town that is today part of Lafayette Boulevard. In 1870, he sold the northern part of his land, adjacent to the Stevens parcel, to J.W. Jennings. Jennings was a member of a local family which had acquired a number of lots surrounding the fairgrounds in the years leading up to the war. Sometime before 1878, Jennings added a house to the property he bought from Hall, which appears to have been the first home built on the recently-formalized Willis Street. The road trace running past the Innis House to the former fairgrounds had also been enlarged, and was now officially known as Mercer Street.

In the first decades after the close of the war, much of the famous stone wall along the eastern side of Telegraph Road was removed, though the reason this was done and what happened to the stone is not certain. By 1886, only about 150 feet of the eastern wall remained, between the Innis and Ebert houses. The wall segment between the Innis and Stevens houses was replaced with a picket fence, though whether it continued further south is not clear. The retaining walls on the west side of the road were apparently unchanged, including the wall beneath Brompton and that at the base of Willis Hill, which had already been substantially removed by the time of the battles. In 1887, a small granite memorial to Brig. General Thomas Cobb, who had fallen defending the stone wall during the First Battle of Fredericksburg, was erected just across Sunken Road from the Stevens house (Figure 9). Around this time, the intersection of Telegraph Road and Mercer Street was regraded to create a smoother transition between the two. This is also likely the time that the remaining segment of the eastern stone wall was extended slightly so that it wrapped around the corner onto Mercer Street.

Douglas Gordon had sold the remaining 11.5 acres of the Willis Hill tract in 1877 to Helen B. Lane,

who at the time resided just to the north at Brompton. Any changes she made to the property are not documented, and five years later it was purchased by Colonel Charles Richardson. In 1889, Richardson made significant improvements to the property believed to include the house that stands atop the hill today. During construction of this house and the associated landscaping, most of the earthworks remaining from the battles are believed to have been substantially removed. The highest of the terraces along the east face of the hill was likely constructed at this time, possibly by filling in the remnants of the battlefield earthworks. This "upper terrace" was actually more of a berm, built atop the highest of the historic terraces, and wrapped partly around the new house on its north, east, and south sides. The details of Richardson's residential landscape are not documented, but it is believed to have been largely open, with lawn areas and scattered trees.

In 1890, the dam on the Hazel Run broke, drying up the supply of water to the mill via the mill race. The dam was not rebuilt, and three years later the mill building, reportedly in use for grain storage at the time, was destroyed by fire. In 1898, the Brent family sold the land to Henry Warden, although, for reasons that are not clear, they retained a right-of-way through the property. Charles Richardson had run into trouble repaying his loans, and in 1897 the Willis Hill property was put up for auction. It was purchased by Henry Chesley, who the next day sold it to William Richardson, a Richmond resident who was of no relation to Charles Richardson. The occupation status of the property under William Richardson is uncertain. He retained the property for twenty years, but is not believed to have made any significant improvements to the site.

Sanborn Insurance maps from the early twentieth century show a systematic encroachment of development east of Telegraph Road. Six homes were standing on the west side of Willis Street by 1912, and a second house had been added to the former Stevens property. The short stretch of Telegraph Road which ran northeast past the Ebert house had been renamed Amplex or Apex, and Telegraph Road itself had been formally extended north via the shunt road to Hanover. By this point all the parcels on the east side of Telegraph Road between the Stevens house and Hanover Street were enclosed by white picket fencing (see Figure 9). In 1913, the Stevens house was lost to fire, and four years later the United Daughters of the Confederacy placed a memorial stone to Martha Stevens on the site. Soon a new house was built just northwest of the original. By 1927, twelve homes and a gas station stood on the property that had been occupied by just three families at the beginning of the Civil War. Although Marye's Hill and Willis Hill themselves remained substantially undeveloped, a veteran standing atop the hill within the National Cemetery would have a far different view eastward than he might have had sixty years prior. The largely open plain east of Telegraph Road and Marye's Heights where so many had fallen was becoming a dense residential neighborhood.



Figure 8. View west from Fredericksburg showing the post-battle landscape including the plain, Marye's Heights, and houses along Sunken Road, 1864 (Park Archives, cropped by OCLP).

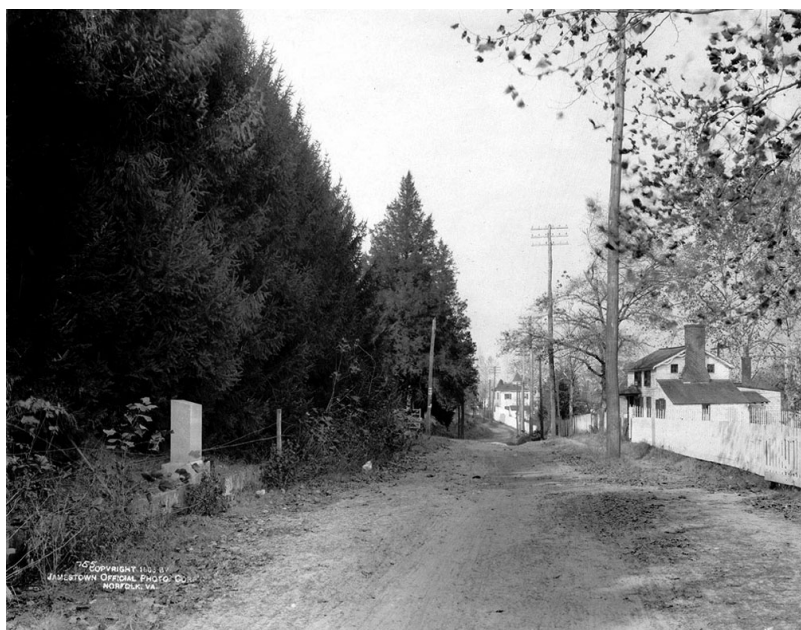


Figure 9. Looking north along Sunken Road towards Hanover Street, from near the Stevens House, ca. 1905. The Cobb Monument is seen at left atop its original stone base, and the Innis House at the right (Park Archives).

## TRANSITION TO PUBLIC OWNERSHIP AND NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PERIOD

As some of the bitterness of the Civil War faded, veterans from both sides of the conflict began to work together to preserve the battlefields where they had fought. As early as 1891, veterans groups had organized to push for a national military park at Fredericksburg, but their efforts failed to bear fruit, and the idea languished for many years. Finally, on February 14, 1927, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park was established by Congress, and placed under the management of the War Department. At first the “park” consisted largely of a series of memorial plaques and interpretive signs installed at key battlefield sites spread widely throughout the county. One such marker was donated by the United Daughters of the Confederacy and placed at the intersection of Telegraph Road (today Sunken Road) and Hanover Street. The park commissioners soon acquired over 2,000 acres, most of it in the less-developed portions of Spotsylvania County south and west of Fredericksburg. However, the plain on which the battles for Marye’s Heights had been fought was now covered in tightly-packed residential lots all the way up to the city line on the west side of Willis Street, obliterating almost all traces of the battlefield landscape (Figure 10). The landscape of Marye’s Hill and Willis Hill retained more of their historic character, but remained in private hands, likely due to prohibitively-high acquisition costs during an economic depression.

On August 10, 1933, the park was transferred with the other National Military Parks to the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service. President Franklin D. Roosevelt funneled money to the park through a number of his New Deal programs, and plans soon began for the construction of a central museum and administration facility to be located in Fredericksburg. The park acquired the former site of the Joseph Hall house, approximately two-and-a-half acres at the corner of Sunken Road and Lafayette Boulevard, and construction began in 1935. Extensive excavations for the main building likely destroyed any remaining archaeological traces of the Hall house. Primary construction was carried out by local contractors using relief workers assigned by the National Reemployment Agency. The development featured a two-story museum and administration building (today known as the Fredericksburg Visitor Center) facing Lafayette Boulevard, set back behind a driveway loop which continued behind the building to a public parking lot (Figure 11). On the northern end, the parking lot had an outlet onto Sunken Road, as the road was now officially called. North of the main building and east of the parking lot were a maintenance garage and adjacent service area. Brick walkways were installed along the edge of the parking lot, at the front and rear entrances to the museum building, and along the front of the property on Lafayette Boulevard. Following the completion of primary site work, the Civilian Conservation Corps planted the landscape with a variety of native deciduous trees, and “old-time” shrubs such as boxwood and holly (Figure 12). Two brick monolithic entry signs and a flagpole were installed along Lafayette Boulevard. In 1939, men from an all-black Civilian Conservation Corps camp located in Chancellorsville reconstructed a 470-foot length of the Sunken Road eastern stone wall between Lafayette Boulevard and the parking lot outlet. The only segment of the original east wall remaining was located to the north, on property still occupied by the Ebert family. Sunken Road itself was unpaved but oiled regularly, and there were no sidewalks or pathways except for the block between Kirkland and Hanover Streets.

The Willis Hill parcel had passed through a series of short-term owners since Charles Richardson, but no significant changes to the landscape can be attributed to this period, with the exception of a small parcel of land purchased to straighten out the property line. In 1937, the now twelve-acre parcel was purchased by local contractor W.C. Spratt. Aerial photography from that year shows that the Willis Hill property he acquired was heavily landscaped, with shrubs and evergreen screens around the house, scattered trees along the east slope, a row of evergreens at the base of the hill along the Sunken Road, and what appears to be an orchard near the western boundary on the far side of an open field (see Figure 10). The size of most of the trees suggests that they likely dated to the Charles Richardson period, if not earlier. By this point, the road trace running up the ravine between Brompton and Willis Hill, which likely had existed in some form for nearly two hundred years, had been formalized into an earthen drive with a mortared stone entranceway at its base along Sunken Road. The terraces on the eastern slope of the hill appear to have been unchanged since the Charles Richardson period.

Although it cannot be confirmed by the available records, it appears that Spratt may also have acquired the Howison’s Mill parcel around the same time as he did Willis Hill. The valley on the back

side of Willis Hill, which appears to have been sparsely vegetated when it sheltered troops during the Civil War, had since filled in with primarily deciduous woods. By this point, the eastern portion of the former mill site had been buried under approximately ten to fifteen feet of fill, likely due to construction at the intersection of the Hazel Run and what is now Lafayette Boulevard in 1929. However, most of the mill race, though it had not held running water for several decades, was still clearly visible within the landscape, and traces of the dam on the Hazel Run as well as secondary dams along the mill race remained. In 1948, Spratt split up and sold the Willis Hill parcel, and just over eight acres atop the hill went to the Daughters of Wisdom, who established a parochial school there called Montfort Academy. In addition to utilizing the Richardson house, the school constructed a number of buildings on the west side of the property. A road leading up back slope of Willis Hill, which was present by the early 1950s, may have been built (or enlarged from an existing road trace) to facilitate the construction of these buildings, or possibly a utility plant on the adjacent University of Mary Washington campus. The road may also have been associated with modern quarrying activity which seems to have taken place on the slope of the hill behind the National Cemetery sometime after 1937.

On the east side of Sunken Road, the Ebert house had deteriorated to the point that it was razed in 1957. This left the Innis house as the only structure along the road remaining from the time of the Civil War. In the late 1950s and early 1960s the park installed a series of interpretive signs along Sunken Road. Around that same time, the City of Fredericksburg paved over the earth and gravel road surface with asphalt. The Ebert property was acquired in 1963 by developer Russell Sullivan. In 1864, the park acquired a half-acre parcel just north of the visitor center parking lot, but was unable to acquire the Ebert house parcel, which was saved from development by the University of Mary Washington (then called Mary Washington College). In 1965, a memorial was erected on the site to Sergeant Richard Kirkland, a Confederate soldier who was known as the “angel of Marye’s Heights” for his tending of wounded Federal soldiers on the battlefield. The former Ebert property was landscaped as a small park, with cedar and magnolia trees providing a year-round backdrop and screening neighboring development. The original stone wall along the property was reportedly altered to accommodate construction of an ornamental entranceway which included stones from the wall.

The park acquired the former Innis and Stevens property in 1969, and soon removed all twentieth century structures from the site. Following this expansion, in 1972 the visitor center landscape underwent what are believed to have been the first noteworthy alterations since the 1930s. The major change was an expansion of the visitor parking lot, including the removal of the small yard area in front of the maintenance building, and the slight realignment of the associated brick walkways and the vehicular exit onto Sunken Road. A pull-off along entrance loop to the rear of the visitor center was removed and replaced with a planting bed, making the visitor center island a symmetrical ellipse. The short brick walkways on the front and rear entrances to the visitor center were also extended at this time to form a continuous loop around the building.

In 1974, a congressional boundary study delineated the park boundary to encompass all parcels along the Sunken Road between Lafayette Boulevard and Hanover Street, as well as the western ends of the lots on the west side of Willis Street. By the end of the decade, the proposed park boundary for the Sunken Road area had been largely filled in, with the exceptions of the Ebert tract and Brompton, which were held by the University of Mary Washington, and Willis Hill, where Montfort Academy continued to operate. The park acquired most of the Howison’s Mill area sometime between 1972 and 1980.

The Ebert house site with the Kirkland Monument was conveyed to the park by the University of Mary Washington in 1987. The park’s legislative boundary was officially established in 1989, and included the lands delineated in the 1974 boundary study, as well the entirety of the parcels on the west side of Willis Street. Public access to the historic resources along the Sunken Road was changed in 1990, when the already one-way road was reduced to a single lane of southbound traffic. A pedestrian path was installed along the eastern half, and separated from traffic by a post-and-rail fence.

Between 1991 and 2001, the park acquired the majority of the residential parcels on west side of

Willis Street to provide a buffer between the Sunken Road landscape and the twentieth century development to the east. Around 1991, the park built an auxiliary visitor parking lot on the southernmost of these parcels, at the corner of Lafayette Boulevard and Willis Street. In 1997, Willis Hill was finally acquired after the closure of Montfort Academy, and the school buildings, with the exception of the Richardson house and a garage, were demolished or removed in 1998-1999. This left Brompton as the most important parcel in the Sunken Road area within the park's legislative boundary still in private hands. Three small homes on the west side of Willis Street also remained occupied. The one-acre family cemetery atop Willis Hill remained legally retained by the heirs of the Wellford family, but is maintained by the park and made accessible to visitors.

In 2004, the park reconstructed two more segments of the eastern stone wall along Sunken Road, north and south of the Stevens house site. Around this same time, the houses and other structures on Willis Street lots which had been acquired by the park were demolished and the sites seeded with grass. Trees and shrubs which had been planted along the former property line were retained. In 2004, the City of Fredericksburg relinquished its right of way to the segment of Sunken Road within the park's legislative boundary, the actual land of which the park had owned since the 1930s. This enabled the park to remove the road's asphalt surface and rehabilitate it to reflect its historic earthen appearance. The road was closed to public vehicular traffic, with the exception of a right-of-way from Mercer Street to the rear entrance of Brompton which was retained by the University of Mary Washington. The pedestrian pathway and fence along the east side of the road were no longer necessary and were removed, and the road shoulder was seeded with grass. A series of interpretive waysides combining text with historic photos were placed at key sites along the road.

Today, the National Park Service owns and manages all land between along the east side of Sunken Road between Lafayette Boulevard and Hanover Street. Three twentieth-century homes remain on Willis Street, on private property within the park's legislative boundary. On the west side of the road, Willis Hill is now accessible to the public, though the Richardson house itself is not. The Willis/Wellford family cemetery is still privately owned, but is maintained by the park and publicly accessible. Marye's Hill and Brompton are retained by the University of Mary Washington, but there are excellent views of the property from Sunken Road, and their historic significance is interpreted by the park via signage along the road.



*Figure 10. The encroachment of residential development upon the Fredericksburg Battlefield, 1937. Sunken Road bisects the frame vertically, with the unfinished visitor center landscape outlined in orange (Park Archives, annotated by OCLP).*



*Figure 11. Aerial view of the Sunken Road and the visitor center complex at lower center, mid-to-late 1950s. Note terraces on Willis Hill, left of center (Park Archives).*



*Figure 12. Looking northeast at the recently completed landscape of the Fredericksburg Visitor Center, 1938 (Park Archives).*

## Uses

### Functions and Uses:

| Major Category         | Category                    | Use/Function                | Historic | Current | Primary |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|---------|---------|
| Commerce/Trade         | Business                    | Concession                  | Yes      | Yes     | No      |
| Defense                | Battle Site                 | Battle Site                 | Yes      | No      | Yes     |
| Domestic (Residential) | Small Residential Landscape | Small Residential Landscape | Yes      | No      | No      |
| Funerary               | Grave/Burial                | Grave/Burial                | Yes      | No      | No      |
| Landscape              | Functional Landscape        | Pedestrian Circulation      | Yes      | Yes     | No      |
| Landscape              | Functional Landscape        | Vehicular Circulation       | Yes      | Yes     | No      |
| Recreation/Culture     | Monument (Marker, Plaque)   | Monument (Marker, Plaque)   | Yes      | Yes     | No      |
| Recreation/Culture     | Museum (Exhibition Hall)    | Exhibit                     | Yes      | Yes     | No      |
| Recreation/Culture     | Museum (Exhibition Hall)    | Wayside Exhibit             | Yes      | Yes     | No      |
| Recreation/Culture     | Outdoor Recreation          | Outdoor Recreation          | No       | Yes     | Yes     |

### Public Access:

**Public Access:** Unrestricted

#### Public Access Narrative:

The grounds of the Sunken Road landscape are open dawn to dusk on a daily basis. Visitor services are located in the Fredericksburg Battlefield visitor center, as well as the Fredericksburg CCC Maintenance Building, which serves as a gift shop. No admission is charged for access to the Sunken Road landscape, although there is a small fee for viewing the movie shown in the visitor center. The Richardson house/Montfort Academy is currently closed to the public, and the Innis house is only open for limited weekend hours.

### Associated Ethnographic Group

**Ethnographic Study Status:** No Survey Conducted

#### Ethnographic Narrative:

## Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

### Analysis and Evaluation of Integrity Narrative Summary:

For the purposes of a Cultural Landscapes Inventory, a landscape is analyzed according to a number of characteristics. Ten such characteristics were found to be relevant to the Sunken Road landscape: natural systems and features, topography, land use, spatial organization, vegetation, circulation, buildings and structures, small scale features, views and vistas, and archaeological sites.

The physical integrity of a cultural landscape is evaluated by comparing its conditions during the period of significance with its current conditions. The period of significance for the Sunken Road landscape has been defined as 1862-1965. However, this broad range encompasses multiple phases of development which are overlaid in the current landscape, and each of which have been deemed to have their own significance. The most important period is the Civil War (1862-1865), as this is how the landscape derives its primary significance. It is the site's history as a battlefield that precipitated the subsequent memorialization and commemoration (1865-1965) and national military park development (1927-1965). Therefore, the existing conditions of landscape characteristics and features will be evaluated in relation to the period of development with which they are most directly associated.

While the Sunken Road landscape underwent massive change over the course of the long historic period, many of the landscape's historic characteristics and features remain intact to their relevant period. Straddling the edge of the Virginia piedmont and the coastal plain, the ridgeline of Marye's Heights rises above the west side of Sunken Road, while to the east the land slopes gently down towards downtown Fredericksburg. The small valley on the southwest side of Willis Hill where Confederate reserve troops and supplies sheltered along the Hazel Run stream remains undeveloped. It was this combination of topography that made the site such a strong defensive position for Confederate forces during the Civil War battles at Fredericksburg, along with the partially-sunken character of the road running along the base of the heights. The stone wall along the eastern side of the road that enhanced the defensive position remains largely intact today, in a combination of original and reconstructed portions, and the road itself has been rehabilitated to reflect its historic appearance. The ca. 1859 Innis House still stands on the east side of the road, and the 1830s mansion Brompton overlooks the Sunken Road landscape from the top of Marye's Hill. Additional traces of the battlefield landscape may be found in archeological sites scattered throughout the property.

After the end of the war, the Sunken Road landscape continued to develop as a residential neighborhood, but the lives lost there were not forgotten. The series of monuments honoring figures from the First Battle of Fredericksburg which were placed near Sunken Road in the century following the Civil War remain effectively unchanged. The early military park development centering upon the 1930s Colonial Revival visitor center retains its essential historic design and character, and even some small scale features such as early signage. When it was built, this small property and the Fredericksburg National Cemetery across the street were the only areas of the historic battlefield that were truly publicly-accessible, and they bore little resemblance to their historic condition. Today, the visitor center serves as a gateway to a greatly-expanded public landscape, which has been rehabilitated by the National Park Service to effectively communicate its Civil War history to the visitor.

Since the end of the historic period, and especially since the end of the Civil War, certain landscape characteristics or features have been altered or lost. Undoubtedly the most important impact has been from changes in land use across the greater battlefield, as the largely open farmland east of Sunken Road evolved into a dense residential neighborhood. This significantly compromised the historic spatial organization of the greater battlefield and views from Sunken Road, although the park has worked to restore the general open character of the portion under their management. The earthworks which were constructed in advance of the two battles at Fredericksburg have been either removed or significantly altered since the end of the fighting. Most of the houses which stood on the historic battlefield have also been lost, with their associated outbuildings and other domestic features. The mill complex in the small valley behind Willis Hill which gave shelter to both Confederate and Union soldiers at various times is gone, and the military road up the hill has been largely obliterated by a modern road, itself now in ruins.

Landscape characteristics and features integral to the post-civil war shaping of the battlefield landscape have

also been impacted, but to a much lesser extent. The memorial and commemorative features installed over the century following the war have experienced some change in setting as the neighborhood was converted to a public park, but this has not lessened their impact. Likewise, the change in setting of the original visitor center property has been beneficial. The circulation around the visitor center has been altered slightly since the end of the historic period in order to facilitate contemporary use and access, but the changes have not negatively impacted the property's character. Some signage has also been replaced since the end of the historic period in order to enhance the park's interpretation of the Civil War landscape.

## INTEGRITY

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. It can also be defined as the extent to which the property evokes its appearance during a particular historic period. While evaluation of integrity is often a subjective judgment, it must be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance. The National Register identifies seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Retention of these qualities is essential to a property conveying its significance, though not all seven aspects must be present to convey a sense of past time and place.

While the overall period of significance for the Sunken Road landscape has been defined as 1862 to 1965, the property has been identified as significant in relation to four historic themes and subthemes, each of which have their own more specific period of significance. Since multiple layers of the property's history have been identified as significant, addressing these themes in turn will help to frame the following discussion of integrity. The most important theme is the Civil War period (1862-1865), as this is how the landscape derives its primary significance. It is the site's history as a battlefield that precipitated the subsequent memorialization and commemoration (1865-1965) and national military park development (1927-1965). Certain resources which are associated with the above themes have also been identified as potentially significant for their contribution to regional architecture (1768-1965), but an evaluation of architectural significance or integrity is beyond the scope of this Cultural Landscapes Inventory.

### The Civil War Period (1862-1865):

Evaluating integrity must be approached somewhat differently with a battlefield than with most designed or vernacular landscapes. The event from which a battlefield derives its significance is by nature transient, and in the many cases unfolds across a collection of unrelated, privately-held properties. After a battle, local residents try to get back to their lives, handling their individual properties as they choose, and the battlefield landscape evolves accordingly. A battle is essentially a moment in time, but the battlefield can rarely, if ever, be frozen in that moment. Therefore, of the seven aspects of integrity defined by the National Register, location, setting, feeling, and association are those which are generally considered most important when evaluating battlefields.

The Sunken Road landscape retains its historic location. West of historic downtown Fredericksburg and straddling the edge of the piedmont and the coastal plain, this location made the site a strategically- important defensive location for Confederate troops during the First and Second Battles of Fredericksburg. The park boundary encompasses primarily the Confederate defensive positions, while the open plain across which Union troops advanced has been a dense residential neighborhood since the late nineteenth century. As a result, the Confederate artillery positions atop Willis Hill today face east over a sea of homes and mature shade trees, instead of the open farm fields of the 1860s. Although key landmarks such as the church steeples of downtown Fredericksburg and the ridgeline of Stafford Heights across the Rappahannock River may still be observed from Willis Hill, the site cannot be said to retain its historic setting.

The question of whether the site retains its historic feeling is less clear. The loss of its rural setting does much to change the feeling of the site as experienced from Willis Hill. However, from the lower ground along Sunken Road, this change is less apparent. Vegetation along the eastern property boundary, while not present historically, helps to screen the adjacent twentieth-century neighborhood from view in many locations, helping to preserve the feeling of rural nineteenth century Virginia. This feeling is conveyed by the open spaces on either side of the Sunken Road, the unpaved road itself, the original and reconstructed stone walls, and the rehabilitated Innis house. The association of the Sunken Road landscape today with the battles fought there is unquestionably strong, and is well-reinforced by the park's interpretive landscape features.

While the battlefield is not truly a designed landscape, several major features from the Civil War period do retain their integrity of design. These include the rehabilitated Sunken Road itself, the stone walls lining it, the terraced east slope of Willis Hill, and the Innis house. The major circulation features also retain their historic alignment, and workmanship and some materials are retained by the Innis House and the original portion of the stone walls.

Another way to understand the integrity of a battlefield landscape is through the traditional military terrain analysis model known today by the acronym KOCOA: (K)ey terrain, (O)bservation and fields of fire, (C)over and concealment, (O)bstacles, and (A)venues of approach. The Sunken Road landscape encompasses the key terrain of the high ground on Willis Hill, which was also a key observation point in the battlefield. The stone walls and partially depressed roadbed of Sunken Road below the hill provided cover and concealment for Confederate infantry stationed at the base of Willis Hill, and the earthworks above provided the same for the artillery. Both of these features are present in the landscape today, although the earthworks are not in their original condition. Most of the obstacles that hindered the movement of Union troops during the First Battle of Fredericksburg lay east of the park boundary and have been lost to urbanization, although the stone walls and the landform of Willis Hill served as obstacles during the second battle. A military road up the southwest slope of Willis Hill served as an avenue of approach for Confederate troops to reach the core battle arena, and remnants of this road appear to persist in the landscape.

The fundamental touchstone for integrity of a battlefield is whether a participant in the battle would be able to recognize the property today as the ground on which they once fought. Taking the above rudimentary KOCOA analysis into consideration, and the site's retention of location, feeling, association, and, to a certain degree, design, it is believed that there are sufficient elements remaining from the historic battlefield to make the overall Sunken Road landscape recognizable to a participant in the battle. The site thus has integrity in relation to the Civil War period.

#### Memorialization and Commemoration (1865-1965):

Formal memorialization of fallen soldiers began soon after the conclusion of the Civil War with the designation of several national cemeteries, including one located on the southern end of Willis. This was followed by a wave of standalone monuments erected by veterans, citizens groups, or the government to honor individuals, or to commemorate the battles themselves. The early monuments were located directly along public roadways, so that they might be accessible to all in an era during which the battlefields were still almost totally privately-held. Five monuments were placed within the Sunken Road landscape following the close of the Civil War: the Thomas R.R. Cobb Monument ca. 1888, the Martha Stevens Stone ca. 1917, a Battle of Fredericksburg Marker donated by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) in 1927, the Martha Stevens Grave Urn ca. 1960, and the Richard R. Kirkland Monument in 1965.

All five memorial or commemorative features substantially retain their historic location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Only the Cobb Monument's location and design have been altered slightly since its installation. The carved granite stone was originally mounted on a second block of smoothly-cut stone, which in turn was apparently placed atop the remnants of the retaining wall at the base of Willis Hill. At some unknown point, though likely before the paving of Sunken Road ca. 1961, the main stone of the monument appears to have been removed from its base and relocated to ground level a few feet north along the road. Because these changes were relatively minor and likely happened during the historic period, however, they are not considered detrimental to the monument's integrity.

The one aspect of integrity that has been compromised is setting, as the Sunken Road monuments were originally located in a primarily residential neighborhood. Today they are situated within a publicly-managed military park, from which post-Civil War residential features have been removed. The Kirkland Monument's immediate setting has also been altered by the installation of a low hedge designed to restrain visitor access. Despite this, the overall retention of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association mean that the Sunken Road landscape retains its overall integrity with regard to memorialization and commemoration.

#### Military Park Development (1927-1965):

While multiple battlefields within the city of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County were shaped by memorial

and commemorative additions soon after the conclusion of the Civil War, it was not until 1927 that the land itself began to be preserved for the public as a national military park. For the northern portion of the Fredericksburg Battlefield, the initial phase of park development took place in the construction of a visitor center along Sunken Road. The development took place between 1935-1938, on an approximately one-and-a-quarter acres parcel at the intersection of Sunken Road and Lafayette Boulevard, with design by the National Park Service and construction carried out by local contractors and the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The location of the visitor center landscape is unchanged from the historic period, as are the locations of its major features. The setting has changed somewhat, as the site was originally located within a primarily residential neighborhood, at the intersection of two busy roads. Today, most of the houses to the north and east of the original approximately two-and-a-half-acre park property have been removed in favor of better conveying the feeling of the Civil War era landscape, and the Sunken Road has been rehabilitated and closed to vehicular traffic.

The design, materials, and workmanship of the Civilian Conservation Corps-built landscape have been largely retained, though there have been some alterations in order to accommodate contemporary access and use. These changes have primarily involved circulation features, and have had little impact on the overall character of the site. They include a slight expansion of the visitor parking lot including the removal of a small enclosed yard area in front of the maintenance garage, an expansion of the historic brick walkway system, and the replacement of the north vehicular exit from the parking lot with a pair of pedestrian pathways. The Civilian Conservation Corps' reconstructed stone wall remains, and exterior alterations to the original buildings have been relatively minor. The maintenance building has been converted to a bookstore and exhibit space, and wheelchair ramps added both there and to the south elevation of the visitor center building. Another change to the historic design and materials of the early park landscape has been the loss of several of the specimen trees on the western half of the property. Whether they were lost to disease or age, or were deliberately removed, is not clear. However, they have likely remained un-replaced in order to better convey the general open character of the area during the Civil War.

The park visitor center landscape retains its feeling from the period of significance. The main building was of a Colonial-Revival design, intended to imitate the architectural styles that were popular in pre-Civil War Virginia. Fredericksburg in the 1930s still retained over 350 historic buildings from the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries, several of which had been made into museums. The park visitor center thus harmonized with the suburban landscape, while at the same time evoking local history and presenting a distinguished public face for the National Military Park. Landscape details including brick walkways and plantings of "old-fashioned" species further contributed to this visitor experience. Some physical features of the original visitor center landscape have been altered to better accommodate public access and use, but this feeling is maintained today. The site's usage also remains much the same, and its historic association is intact.

The early park landscape thus retains its historic location, fundamental design, feeling, association, and substantial materials and workmanship. The one aspect which has significantly changed, the setting, actually enhances the park's feeling and association, so the Sunken Road landscape retains its integrity with regard to the military park development period.

The following section presents an analysis of landscape characteristics and their associated features and corresponding List of Classified Structures names and numbers, if applicable. It also includes an evaluation of whether the feature contributes to the property's National Register eligibility for the historic period (1862-1965), contributes to the property's historic character, or if it is noncontributing, undetermined, or managed as a cultural resource.

**Landscape Characteristic: Natural Systems and Features**

**Historic and Existing Conditions:**

Natural systems including geology, soil structure, and hydrology played an important role in the development of the Sunken Road cultural landscape. Sunken Road is located along a transitional zone between the Piedmont plateau and the coastal plain. To the west, Marye's Heights represents the eastern edge of the Piedmont, and is underlain by bedrock of the Potomac Group. The bedrock is composed primarily of fluvially-deposited sandstone and conglomerate. The sandstone of the southern portion of the Marye's Heights landform, known as Willis Hill, is of relatively high quality. This led to quarrying activities there beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, and apparently continuing sporadically into the twentieth century. Sandstone from this quarry is believed to have been used in the construction of the stone walls along Sunken Road. The quarrying activity appears to have contributed to significant erosion and subsidence currently occurring on the southwest slope of Willis Hill behind the National Cemetery (Figure 13).

The sandstone bedrock of Marye's Heights contributed parent material to the topsoil above, which are relatively gravelly and thus not prime farmland. This appears to have limited their agriculture use to grazing. Topsoils on the plain to the east of the road appear to have historically been comprised of more loam and better suited for crops. However, twentieth century urban development has altered the soil profile there, making it difficult to ascertain the historic soil composition.

Hydrologic features are concentrated primarily in a small valley on the southwest side of Willis Hill. Several springs located along the slopes give rise to small streams which join a larger stream known as the Hazel Run. These water sources provided economic opportunity in the form of a grist mill that was built within the valley in 1797, and continued operations for nearly 100 years.

**Landscape Characteristic Graphics:**



*Figure 13. Looking northeast at the erosion occurring on the sandy southwest slope of Willis Hill, uphill from numerous archaeological resources (OCLP, 2011).*

**Landscape Characteristic: Topography**

**Historic Conditions (through 1965):**

Marye's Heights is part of a broad terrace, which constitutes the edge of the Virginia Piedmont, and appeared from historic downtown Fredericksburg as a long, discontinuous ridgeline. The southern portion of Marye's Heights is known as Willis Hill, and stands approximately one hundred and forty feet above sea level, the eastern slope dropping quickly approximately forty feet before continuing in a gentler, naturally-terraced plain towards the Rappahannock River. The southwest slope drops steeply into a small valley which is bisected roughly north-south by a deeply-carved ravine. The sides of the valley decrease in steepness as they approach the Hazel Run, creating a small gently-sloping plain which is enclosed on the north, west, and east by steep slopes. Topographic modifications were made to several areas within the Sunken Road landscape prior to the Civil War, including a quarry on the southwest slope of Willis Hill, excavated water channels and a road for a mill operation located in the small valley along the Hazel Run, and a terracing project on the east slope of Willis Hill, likely carried out to decrease erosion. The construction of the Sunken Road itself altered the topography when it was partially cut into base of Marye's Heights, as well as through an alluvial fan between today's Mercer and Kirkland Streets. This cutting activity, combined with many years of compaction and erosion, resulted in the partially "sunken" character that gave the road its eventual name.

Topography played a crucial role in the two battles fought at Fredericksburg during the Civil War. Marye's Heights, the small valley on the back side of Willis Hill, and the gently-sloping plain leading down to Fredericksburg combined to provide Confederate troops with an excellent natural defensive position which was enhanced in the days and weeks prior to the battles with constructed earthworks. A series of lunettes and shelter trenches were built atop Willis Hill, and a slit trench was dug into the Sunken Road. Earth from the slit trench was reportedly thrown up against the eastern side of the road's east stone wall to form a parapet, further enhancing the road's "sunken" appearance. On the west side of Willis Hill, a narrow military road was cut into the hillside to transport men and supplies between the sheltered valley and the heights above.

Following the second battle, the trench along Sunken Road was likely quickly filled in, and the hilltop fortifications and military road were substantially obliterated by later residential and institutional development. Three of the four lunettes built atop Willis Hill for the First Battle of Fredericksburg are believed to have been filled in to create the berm or "first terrace" which can currently be seen wrapping partially around the ca. 1889 Richardson house. The topography of the Sunken Road landscape was further modified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as infrastructure in the neighborhood was improved and expanded. An upland impoundment and berm were created on the west slope of Willis Hill, possibly to improve drainage for the National Cemetery. The site of the mill on the Hazel Run and the eastern end of the mill race were buried by fill associated with a road improvement project ca. 1929. A combination of quarrying activity and the construction of a modern road up the back slope of Willis Hill sometime after 1937 resulted in the substantial destruction of the Civil War era military road. The construction of the visitor center and its parking lot in 1936-1937 involved major re-grading of the site of the Joseph Hall farm.

**Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:**

Today the topography of the Sunken Road Landscape remains substantially as it was at the end of the historic period. Sunken Road and its shoulders were slightly re-graded when it was closed to vehicular traffic and rehabilitated in 2005, but this better reflects its Civil War character (Figure 14). While three lunettes from the First Battle of Fredericksburg have apparently been subsumed by the berm around the Richardson house, faint traces of the fourth lunette in the line remain south of the house, and a shelter trench and lunette from the second battle are still visible to its northeast. The terraces on Willis Hill reflect their condition following the Richardson alterations (Figure 15). In the small valley east of Willis Hill where Howison's Mill was located during the Civil War, a number of major and minor topographic features are still discernible in the landscape, including what is believed to be a remnant of the military road dating to the battles at Fredericksburg (Figure 16). However, erosion has made them less clear and twentieth century construction and quarrying activities have also left their mark. Some of these features are identified as archaeological sites, and are thus listed in the Archeological Sites section.

\*Feature described in National Register (draft)

Landscape Features:

| Feature Name                          | CLI Feature ID | Feature Contribution | CRIS-HS Resource ID | Associated CRIS-AR ID | FMSS Record Type | FMSS Record Number | FMSS Exact Match |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Willis Hill Terraces                  | 153255         | Contributing         |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Marye's Heights Earthworks* (#FR0150) | 153257         | Contributing         |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 14. Looking south along Sunken Road from south of Hanover Street. Note the cut of the roadbed into the surrounding landform, and the original retaining walls. The Innis house is in the distance. (OCLP, 2011).

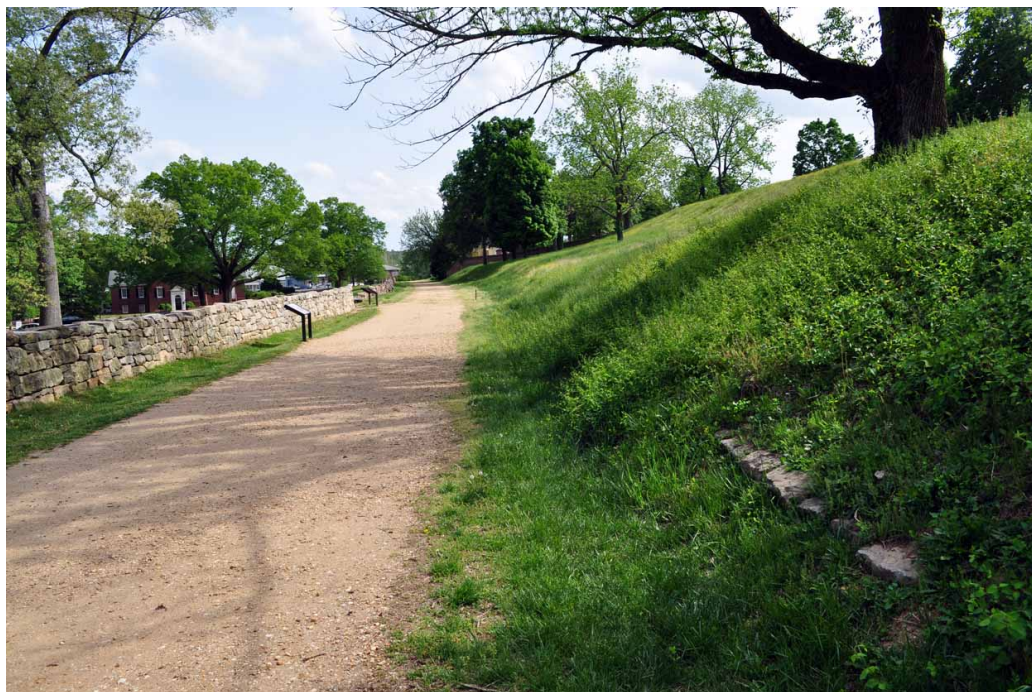


*Figure 15. Looking south along Sunken Road from the base of the Willis Hill lower terrace. Note the footer stones for a long-vanished retaining wall (right) and the reconstructed stone wall (left) (OCLP, 2011).*



*Figure 16. Looking south at the apparent remnants of the Civil War era military road in the wooded valley on the western side of Willis Hill (OCLP, 2011).*

**Landscape Characteristic: Land Use**

**Historic Conditions (through 1965):**

From the early 1700s through the late 1800s, the Sunken Road landscape land use was primarily domestic and agricultural. Most of the property was initially part of the large Willis family plantation, which is believed to have included tobacco, livestock, and grain crops at varying times. In 1797, a grain mill was constructed in the small valley west of Willis Hill, the southwest slope of which was also quarried. As the former Willis plantation was divided up into smaller parcels in the decades prior to the Civil War, domestic uses became more prominent along the Sunken Road, with agriculture apparently becoming limited to small-scale or subsistence activities.

The most famous land use of the Sunken Road landscape is as a battlefield, the site of heavy fighting during both the First and Second Battles of Fredericksburg. Over the course of these two battles, significant defensive earthworks were constructed both atop the heights and along the road, and the domestic properties in the area were scavenged. The Joseph Hall property was laid almost completely bare, and after the end of the war served as an encampment area for crews working on construction of the National Cemetery. Following the cessation of conflict, however, domestic use of the land resumed, and most traces of the battlefield landscape were removed. In the decades following the war, the Sunken Road landscape began to grow into a denser residential neighborhood, the farm fields east of the road converted into small residential lots. The landscape also began to take on a commemorative function, first with scattered privately-erected monuments, and later with the construction of a visitor center for the Fredericksburg Battlefield in 1936. However, even after the creation of the park, most of the Sunken Road landscape remained private property and developed accordingly. Willis Hill became home to Montfort Academy in 1948. The small valley on its southwest side remained largely undeveloped, with the exception of a road built through it, possibly associated with construction for Montfort Academy or the University of Mary Washington to the north. East of Sunken Road, the park visitor center was surrounded by increasingly dense residential development. The road itself remained an active thoroughfare, with a right-of-way retained by the City of Fredericksburg.

**Post-Historic and Existing Conditions (post-1965):**

Today use of the Sunken Road landscape is primarily interpretive and recreational (see Figure 15). Since the end of the period of significance, additional properties around the Sunken Road have been acquired for incorporation into the park, leaving only a few in-holdings within the legislative boundary. The most notable of these is the former Marye mansion, Brompton. The city of Fredericksburg gave up its right-of-way to the section of Sunken Road within the park boundary in 2005, and the road itself now is pedestrian-only, used primarily for interpretive and recreational purposes.

**Landscape Characteristic: Spatial Organization**

**Historic Conditions (through 1965):**

The large-scale spatial organization of the Sunken Road landscape was from its earliest development shaped by the natural topography. The road itself was formalized in the early 1800s along a break in slope at the base of Marye's Heights, and was the primary organizing feature of subsequent development in the neighborhood. It was bordered by largely open farmland on the east, with views down a gentle slope to Fredericksburg and the Rappahannock River, and enclosed on the west by the ridgeline of Marye's Heights. Cut partially into the hillside and worn down through long years of use, the enclosed character of the road corridor was enhanced by the construction of a stone wall along its eastern side ca. 1830, and a row of evergreen trees planted along much of its western side around the same time. Scattered houses, outbuildings, and fencing could be found east of Sunken Road during the decades leading up to the Civil War, but its character remained substantially open. West of the road, the landform of Marye's Heights had lent itself to a different pattern of development. A series of plantation or farm complexes were built atop Willis Hill, with a portion of the surrounding hilltop apparently used for grazing. By the time of the

Civil War, this had resulted in a largely open landscape with scattered shade trees. The extents of this open area are not known, but woods apparently began somewhere on the west side of the hilltop, providing some degree of western enclosure. To the southwest, the Howison's Mill complex on the Hazel Run was naturally enclosed on three sides by small valley in which it was sited.

When battle came to Fredericksburg in December of 1862, the spatial organization of the Sunken Road landscape played a key role in the course of the fighting. West of the road, the Confederates held the high ground on Marye's Heights, which they fortified with earthworks on the eastern edge, as well as the built-in shelter trench of the Sunken Road corridor itself. The small valley on the back side of Willis Hill provided a relatively secure location from which reserve troops and supplies could be brought up to the heights above. In contrast, the open plain sloping eastward and downhill from the road gave the advancing Union infantry a major strategic disadvantage despite their superior numbers.

Following the Civil War, the spatial organization of the Sunken Road landscape evolved primarily through the process of urbanization, as most of the open plain east of Sunken Road upon which the battles had been fought was subdivided into a dense residential neighborhood. While not as tightly packed as the blocks further east, several additional homes were built along Sunken Road itself, and the buildings and their associated vegetation created a stronger sense of enclosure along the road corridor than had existed during the Civil War. The southern half of the stretch of the road between Lafayette Boulevard and Mercer Street remained somewhat open thanks to the park visitor center which was completed in 1936, with a main building facing Lafayette Boulevard and a parking lot located to the north, tucked downhill from the road. Across the road, Willis Hill was not subdivided in the manner that the plain to the east was, but a succession of landowners cultivated numerous shade trees and other vegetation which broke up the open space atop the hill.

By the end of the historic period, Sunken Road between Lafayette Boulevard and Hanover Street was partially enclosed by irregularly-spaced homes and mature trees, while denser development began just east on Willis Street and stretched all the way to downtown Fredericksburg. Willis Hill was home to Montfort Academy, dotted with mature shade trees and evergreens, and with the western half of the property hosting complex of school buildings. The small valley southwest of Willis Hill where Howison's Mill had been located, which was at least partially cleared at the time of the Civil War, had filled in with dense second-growth forest.

#### Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:

Since the end of the historic period, the spatial organization of the Sunken Road landscape has been altered most dramatically by the removal of almost all post-Civil War buildings. These included the twentieth century houses on Sunken Road and Willis Street, which were demolished in phases as the park expanded over the years, as well as most of Montfort Academy buildings on Willis Hill. These removals have restored some of the open character that dominated the neighborhood at the time of the Civil War. Additionally, the removal or loss of numerous trees on either side of the road, including a screen of evergreens at the base of Willis Hill, has reduced the feeling of enclosure along the Sunken Road corridor itself. The spatial organization of the visitor center landscape has been altered by some changes to vehicular circulations, but fundamentally retains its original design (Figure 17).

**Landscape Characteristic Graphics:**



*Figure 17. Looking south at the rear of the 1930s visitor center development, set down slope from Sunken Road. The large oak trees are original plantings by the Civilian Conservation Corps (OCLP, 2011).*

**Landscape Characteristic: Vegetation**

**Historic Conditions (through 1965):**

Prior to English settlement, the entire Sunken Road landscape was most likely covered with a mixed deciduous-evergreen forest, but all but the steepest slopes were apparently cleared by mid-1700s, and put into agricultural use as part of the large Willis family plantation. After the property was sold out of the family and divided, agricultural operations were reduced in scale, and vegetation patterns changed again, as shade trees, orchards, and likely some ornamental plantings were incorporated into the rural residential landscape. By the time of the Civil War, the plain east of the Sunken Road was mostly open, with shade trees and shrubs clustered around the homes along the road, surrounded by a landscape of grassy yard areas and garden plots (see Figure 7). The Joseph Hall property is known to have contained an orchard, and other properties along the road likely contained some fruit trees as well. The top of Willis Hill appears to have been largely open with scattered small trees, its eastern slope covered in shrubs and small trees, and an irregularly-spaced line of evergreen trees planted at its base along Sunken Road. On the west side of the hilltop the native woods began, continuing down steep slopes towards the Hazel Run, though the small valley appears to have been partially-cleared.

After the Civil War, the east side of Sunken Road remained relatively open for a number of years, with the few shade trees continuing to mature, and the gardens and fields which had been plundered by both armies re-established and tended once more (see Figure 3). An orchard was added in the rear of the Innis House property at an unknown date, and several maples along the edge of the road in front of the Ebert House. On the west side of the road, the trees along the eastern slope of Willis Hill began to mature, and by 1889, Colonel Charles Richardson had acquired Willis Hill and built a large residence there. Documentation from this period is scant, but it appears

that significant landscaping was carried out around the Richardson residence, including a number of new specimen trees and shrub plantings around the house.

As the city of Fredericksburg expanded westward and residential development around Sunken Road increased, canopy cover increased in density as well. Shade trees grew in individual yards, and along the grassy shoulders of Sunken Road itself. By the 1930s, the largest area of open space remaining was a field where the Joseph Hall farm had stood at the time of the Civil War. It was on this site that in 1936-37 the National Park Service constructed a museum and administration building (known since the 1960s as the Fredericksburg Visitor Center). The property was primarily occupied by two buildings and a parking lot, but was planted by the Civilian Conservation Corps with specimen trees including oaks, holly, hawthorn, black locust, and red cedar, with “old-fashioned” shrubs including boxwood, privet, and lilac planted immediately around the main building.

By the end of the historic period, the Sunken Road corridor between Lafayette Boulevard and Hanover Street was substantially enclosed by mature, irregularly-spaced trees, some growing directly on the road shoulder and some set back on the adjacent properties. The plantings on the eastern edge of the visitor center property had matured, helping to screen views of the adjacent suburban homes, and a boxwood hedge bordered the visitor center entrance loop. Various shade trees and shrubs could be also be found in the yards of the residences along Willis Street. In 1965, the Kirkland Monument was dedicated on land where the Ebert house had stood, and the property was planted with cedar and magnolia trees to provide an attractive backdrop for the statue.

#### Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:

Since the end of the historic period, numerous specimen trees have been lost or removed from the Sunken Road landscape. The removal of trees along the road, or lack of replacement after their natural death, has been part of an effort to better reflect the vegetation of the landscape at the time of the Civil War. However, a substantial number of trees and shrubs still remain along the original boundary between the park and adjacent residential lots on Willis Street, as well as scattered trees on the former building sites themselves. This vegetation currently helps screen the twentieth-century houses remaining on Willis Street from view from Sunken Road (Figure 18). The low holly hedge which currently surrounds the Kirkland Monument was added by the park ca. 1990 in order to control unauthorized access to the monument (Figure 19).

None of the specimen vegetation in the Sunken Road landscape is believed to date back to the Civil War, but some original specimens from the Civilian Conservation Corps plantings remain around the visitor center. These include several large oaks on the north and east sides of the main building, and oak, holly, and red cedar near the former maintenance garage and current bookstore (Figure 20). Several large historic trees which had become safety hazards were removed by the park in 2008. Numerous specimen trees and shrubs remain atop Willis Hill dating from the Montfort Academy period. In 2008, the park thinned the ornamental vegetation immediately surrounding the Richardson House to improve surveillance of the vacant building and reduce vandalism.

Landscape Features:

| Feature Name                           | CLI Feature ID | Feature Contribution         | CRIS-HS Resource ID | Associated CRIS-AR ID | FMSS Record Type | FMSS Record Number | FMSS Exact Match |
|----------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Visitor Center specimen trees          | 153259         | Contributing                 |                     |                       | Asset            | 1321634            | Yes              |
| Visitor Center entrance loop hedge     | 153261         | Contributing                 |                     |                       | Asset            | 1321922            | Yes              |
| Visitor Center lawn                    | 153263         | Contributing                 |                     |                       | Asset            | 11014              | Yes              |
| Visitor Center shrubs                  | 153265         | Contributing                 |                     |                       | Asset            | 1321638            | Yes              |
| Kirkland Monument specimen trees       | 153267         | Contributing                 |                     |                       | Asset            | 1322029            | Yes              |
| Kirkland Monument lawn                 | 153269         | Contributing                 |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Evergreen row along Willis Street lots | 153271         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Kirkland Monument hedge                | 153273         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       | Asset            | 1322026            | Yes              |
| Richardson House shrubs                | 153275         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Willis Hill specimen trees             | 153277         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



*Figure 18. Looking east from Willis Hill towards downtown Fredericksburg. Note the line of evergreens providing screening along the property line. The 1930s reconstructed stone wall is at right, the 2004 reconstructed stone wall at left (OCLP, 2011).*



*Figure 19. Looking north at the Kirkland Monument landscape, including low evergreen hedge and magnolia and cedar screening/backdrop (OCLP, 2011).*



*Figure 20. Looking east at the driveway loop which encircles the visitor center, leading from Lafayette Boulevard to the parking lot north of the building. Some trees date to the 1930s (OCLP, 2011).*

**Landscape Characteristic: Circulation**

**Historic Conditions (through 1965):**

What is today called Sunken Road likely began as an informal track through the Willis plantation in the mid-1700s. By the time of the Civil War it was part of the major road connecting Fredericksburg to Richmond, and it was known as Spotsylvania Courthouse Road or Telegraph Road. Roughly twenty-four feet wide, it approached Willis Hill from the south, wrapped east and north around its base, and continued along the break in slope for approximately 1800 feet before forking below Brompton. The main road turned northeast to merge with the Orange Turnpike as it headed into Fredericksburg and turned into Hanover Street, while a short shunt road continued north to meet the Turnpike directly. The road was cut into the hillside on the its west side all along Marye's Heights, and into an alluvial fan on part of its east side between today's Mercer and Kirkland Streets, resulting in a partially-sunken appearance within the landscape. The earthen surface had been compacted by many years of use and erosion, and the stone wall running along most of its east side made the road a ready-made shelter trench for Confederate infantry to utilize during the battles.

Other circulation in the area at the time of the Civil War consisted of a series of road traces or informal cart tracks, which were platted but not yet formal roads. One led east towards Fredericksburg near the Hall house (then called Frederick Street, later Prussia or National Boulevard, and now part of Lafayette Boulevard), and a second began just north of the Innis house and lead east to the Stratton house and neighboring fairgrounds (Mercer Street). Additionally, at least one informal two-track driveway led up the ravine between Willis Hill and Marye's Hill, and at least one small road served the Howison's Mill complex on the west side of Willis Hill. On the west slope of Willis Hill, a military road was carved into the hillside (or possibly enlarged from an existing trace) and served to shuttle men and troops between the sheltered valley along the Hazel Run and the firing lines on Marye's Heights above.

In the decades following the Civil War, circulation in the Sunken Road neighborhood was modernized to a certain extent, but largely retained its historic alignment. Mercer, Willis, and Frederick Street became formalized roads as the plain between Sunken Road and Fredericksburg was developed. The Sunken Road itself underwent some modifications, including re-grading, the addition of a drainage ditch, and a raised earthen sidewalk along its east shoulder between Hanover Street and the vicinity of the Stevens House. An offshoot of the sidewalk branched east at the Ebert House, and was supported by a low stone retaining wall on the edge bordering the road. By 1911, the sidewalk had been significantly worn down, and the road itself had taken on an appearance of disrepair, its roadbed now an uneven width, with significant vegetation growing within it. By this point, Sunken Road, or Telegraph Road as it still appeared on maps, had officially been extended north across Hanover Street, while the original segment running northeast towards Fredericksburg had been renamed Amplex or Apex (today Kirkland Street). Around 1927, the name of Telegraph Road was officially changed to Sunken Road.

When the park opened a museum and administration building for the Fredericksburg Battlefield in 1937, Sunken Road was still an active two-way thoroughfare, although the city and county had deeded the land on which it was built to the National Park Service. The park sited the main building facing Lafayette Boulevard, set back behind an asphalt entrance loop lined with concrete curbs. The entrance loop continued north in an ellipse around the building to a visitor parking lot. An outlet at the north end of the parking lot led out onto Sunken Road itself. A brick sidewalk ran along the front of the park property on Lafayette Boulevard, and matching walkways lined the parking lot and the front and rear entrances to the visitor center, likely built at least in part by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Sunken Road was paved in asphalt around 1961, although the other roads in the neighborhood had already been paved for some years. Also paved by this time was the access road leading up to Willis Hill from Sunken Road, which now led to an asphalt parking lot and driveways for Montfort Academy.

**Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:**

Changes to the circulation of the Sunken Road landscape since the end of the historic period have been significant, although for the most part they have been made to help restore historic character

and improve visitor access.

Sometime after 1965, Kirkland Street was turned into a dead-end terminating at the former site of the Ebert house. The asphalt road segment to the west, which was part of the original alignment of Telegraph Road, was removed and grassed over. In 1972, the park redesigned the circulation surrounding the visitor center. The enclosed yard in front of the maintenance building was removed and the parking lot expanded to hold forty-two cars, with the sidewalks connecting it to the visitor center realigned. At this time a pull-off cutout was removed from the entrance loop behind the visitor center, and the short brick walkways at the north and south entrances were extended to form a continuous ellipse around the building (see Figure 20).

The most significant changes to circulation have been made to the Sunken Road itself. In 1972, the city of Fredericksburg designated the stretch between Lafayette Boulevard and Hanover Street a one-way road in order to improve safety for visitors to the park. In 1990, it was narrowed to a single lane, and the park built a pedestrian path along the eastern half, separated from vehicular traffic by a post-and-rail fence. Finally, in 2004, the city of Fredericksburg gave up its right-of-way for the portion of Sunken Road within the park boundary. Both the asphalt surface and the fenced-off pedestrian path were removed, and the road, including the grassed-over intersection with Kirkland Street, was rehabilitated to reflect its historic earthen appearance. Modern construction methods and materials were employed, however, to maximize accessibility (see Figure 15). A right-of-way remains in effect between Mercer Street and the rear entrance to Brompton, currently owned by the University of Mary Washington, and this segment is paved in exposed aggregate concrete which is roughly compatible with the historic road character.

In 1991, an auxiliary bus parking lot was built on a newly-acquired parcel on the corner of Willis Street and Lafayette Boulevard, and additional brick pathways were added to connect the lot to the visitor center. Sometime between the late 1970s and early 1990s, the park removed the vehicular outlet from the main parking lot to the Sunken Road and constructed a pedestrian path in this approximate location. Another pathway was constructed to serve the Innis house and the Martha Stevens house site. These pathways today provide for universal access, paved in earthen-colored concrete with certain segments realigned or added to provide a gentler slope (Figure 21). A flagstone pathway to Kirkland Monument, which been installed at an unknown date, was replaced between 2004 and 2007 with colored concrete as well, the approach to the monument from the south edged with stones (see Figure 18). Willis Hill is reached via the former Montfort Academy access road, or a mown grass path which leads out of the adjacent National Cemetery, and runs north along the top of the hill past the battlefield earthwork traces. Interpretive waysides areas along the paved pedestrian paths are edged in stone, as are those along the grass path atop Willis Hill.

\*Feature described in National Register (draft)

Sunken Road Landscape  
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

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**Landscape Features:**

| Feature Name                                                          | CLI Feature ID | Feature Contribution         | CRIS-HS Resource ID | Associated CRIS-AR ID | FMSS Record Type | FMSS Record Number | FMSS Exact Match |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Sunken Road* (#FR0152a)                                               | 153619         | Contributing                 | 429                 |                       | Asset            | 17518              | Yes              |
| (Original) Visitor's Center Walkways* (#FR0146b)                      | 153621         | Contributing                 | 82070               |                       | Location         | 24291              | Yes              |
| Visitor Center Entrance Loop* (#FR0146a)                              | 153645         | Contributing                 | 82123               |                       | Location         | 24283              | No               |
| Original Telegraph Road segment (now Kirkland St.)                    | 153651         | Contributing                 |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Visitor Center rear parking lot                                       | 153653         | Contributing                 |                     |                       | Location         | 24283              | No               |
| Auxiliary bus parking lot                                             | 153671         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Post-1965 Visitor Center brick walkways                               | 153673         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Concrete walkways from Visitor Center rear parking lot to Sunken Road | 154259         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Kirkland Monument & Ebert site walkway                                | 153693         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Innis House/Stevens House site walkways                               | 153709         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Montfort Academy access road                                          | 153735         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Montfort Academy driveways                                            | 153743         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Montfort Academy parking lot                                          | 153745         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Willis Hill grass pathways                                            | 153747         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |

**Landscape Characteristic Graphics:**



*Figure 21. Looking north along the contemporary concrete pedestrian path connecting the Stevens house site and the rehabilitated Innis house (OCLP, 2011).*

**Landscape Characteristic: Buildings and Structures**

**Historic Conditions (through 1965):**

The earliest structures documented within the Sunken Road landscape were located atop Willis Hill and affiliated with the Willis family plantation. In 1797 Willis sold a small parcel at the southwest base of Willis Hill to his neighbor Fontaine Maury, who constructed a grain mill complex there. The Willis family home burned in 1817 and was not rebuilt, though some secondary structures may have survived for a time and been used as slave quarters.

The origins of the famous stone walls lining Sunken Road are not certain due to minimal early documentation and their substantial destruction in the decades following the Civil War. In 1821, John Wellford acquired the Willis property, which at the time included the land on either side of Sunken Road. Though the date is not known, Wellford is reported to have constructed stone walls on either side of the road where it ran through his lands. The stone for his walls has been attributed to leftover materials from the sandstone quarry on the southwest slope of Willis Hill. The wall along the east side of Sunken Road appears to have included both freestanding and retaining segments, running north from today's Lafayette Boulevard to follow Sunken Road as it turned east along today's Kirkland Street, with a break at the location of the Stevens house. The western wall was a retaining wall, and the portion along Willis Hill had been removed by the time of the Civil War. A retaining wall running along the west side of Sunken Road between today's Mercer and Hanover Streets was built ca. 1830 by John L. Marye around the same time he built his mansion named Brompton. The Brompton stone wall was similar in construction to the northern portion of the wall on the east side of the road, composed of weathered, rounded, rubble stone. The eastern wall south of the Stevens house was constructed with larger, quarried blocks.

The next building to appear within the Sunken Road landscape, possibly as early as 1826, is believed to have been a small white house built on John Wellford's land across the road from Willis Hill. The one-and-a-half-story cottage, which would later become known as the Ebert house, and an associated well and barn stood at the corner of Sunken Road where it bent east towards Fredericksburg. Wellford had also acquired the mill on the Hazel Run, and is reported to have built an additional mill building there by 1836. South of the Ebert house along the east side of Sunken Road, the one-and-a-half-story Stevens house was built as early as the 1830s or 1840s, and included several small outbuildings and a well. Around 1856, Joseph Hall acquired a parcel south of the Stevens house, and built a one-and-a-half-story home and associated outbuildings, including a barn and corncrib. Around the same time, Martha Stevens added another small two-story house on her property, located just north of her own home, for her son John Innis. Willis Hill is believed to have remained devoid of any major structural improvements until ca. 1857, when then-owner William Mitchell constructed a small one-story brick residence and at least one dependency. The smaller building stood just east of the small family cemetery's northern wall near the Willis plantation's well, and the larger one about one-hundred-fifty feet to the south.

In all, by the time battle came to Fredericksburg in 1862, the Sunken Road landscape contained five homes: the Mitchell cottage, Ebert house, Innis house, Stevens house, and Hall house, along with their associated outbuildings and structures. The mill complex on the Hazel Run, which by then was owned by John Howison, now included a miller's cottage. Brompton, or the Marye mansion, also stood above Sunken Road to the north of Willis Hill. The buildings along Sunken Road played an important role in the First and Second Battles of Fredericksburg, as they sheltered Confederate troops during the battles, and sustained varying amounts of damage during the heavy fighting. The Mitchell buildings on Willis Hill and the Hall house and outbuildings suffered the worst, and were in ruins by 1864. The Ebert house, Stevens house, and Innis house, as well as the Howison's Mill complex, all sustained some damage but were eventually re-occupied, and by 1878, Joseph Hall had built a new house on his property. Also by this time, the first home had appeared on the recently-formalized Willis Street. Sometime before the 1890s, electric lines were installed along the Sunken Road, mounted on a series of wooden utility poles.

In 1889, Charles Richardson, who had acquired the property some years before, built a new house atop Willis Hill. The two-and-a-half-story brick building and a stable/garage were located at the highest elevation on the site, slightly north of the area where the Willis and Mitchell complexes had been. Around this time, two smaller buildings also appeared on the east side of Sunken Road, including one south of the Stevens house, and one at the corner of Hanover Street. By this time most of the stone wall on the eastern side of Sunken Road had been dismantled and removed for unknown reasons, with only the segment between Mercer Street and the Ebert house remaining. Howison's Mill was lost to fire in 1894, though it had not been operational for several years. The original Stevens house was destroyed by fire in 1913, but it was soon replaced with a new building set closer to the road.

Sometime between 1919 and 1927, the second Hall house was removed and a gas station constructed on the property, which was itself removed when the property was purchased by the National Park Service ca. 1935 to serve as the location for a museum and administration building for the Fredericksburg Battlefield. The building was completed in 1937, a two-story, three-bay, brick building with a gable roof. The main entrance faced Lafayette Boulevard (formerly known as Frederick Street or National Boulevard), with a secondary entrance to the rear, off a visitor parking lot. To the northeast of the main building, stood a one-story, brick maintenance building and garage, which also contained a segregated restroom for African American visitors. On the west side of the visitor center parcel, between Lafayette Boulevard and a point along Sunken Road directly east of the Richardson house, the Civilian Conservation Corps reconstructed the historic stone wall which had stood there at the time of the battles. The rebuilt wall was composed of compatible material, though the new stones were somewhat smaller than the originals and the construction utilized a cast-in place core and mortar on the interior.

When the visitor center opened to the public in 1937, the Innis house, Ebert house, and Brompton were the only buildings along Sunken Road which remained from the Civil War and all stood on private property. Between the Innis house and the visitor center parking lot stood three twentieth-

century homes, and Willis Street had also filled in with modest homes, a number of them with garages set to the rear of their lots almost directly abutting the visitor center property. Sometime between the initial visitor center landscape construction and the late 1950s, the park added a small one-story brick storage building on the east side of the parking lot, which apparently served various functions over the years and is identified in the draft National Register documentation as a restroom.

Willis Hill had passed through a series of owners since the turn of the century, during which time the Richardson house is believed to have undergone at least some structural modification, the extents and date of which are not clear. In 1948 the property was sold to the Daughters of Wisdom, who established a private school called Montfort Academy. A new two-story school building was also constructed to the west of the Richardson house, and a two-story garage built just west of the Richardson house, replacing the original Richardson stable/garage. A new wing was added to the west side of the school building in 1960.

The Ebert house was razed in 1957, having been apparently unoccupied and in a state of disrepair for several years. The Innis house remained privately owned and occupied through the end of the historic period.

#### Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:

As the park acquired additional parcels within the Sunken Road landscape, they demolished any post-Civil War buildings and structures present. The first round of removal took place on the Stevens house site in the early 1970s, followed by the removal of the house at the corner of Sunken Road and Hanover Street at the end of the decade. The removal of the utility lines along the east side of the road likely took place around this time. Between 1991 and 2003, the NPS removed a gas station and ten homes, along with their associated outbuildings, from property acquired along Willis Street. Today only three twentieth-century homes remain along the west side of the street, within the park boundary, and these are slated for removal when the parcels can be acquired by the park.

Most of the buildings and structures within the Sunken Road landscape at the time of the First and Second Battles of Fredericksburg are no longer present. The Innis house is the only home remaining on the site from the Civil War era, and it underwent numerous modifications during its post-war years under private ownership. The park acquired the property in 1969, and began the first round of rehabilitation in 1977, followed by additional work in 1987 (see Figure 21). One segment of the original stone wall on the east side of Sunken Road remains, between Mercer and Kirkland Streets, as well portions of the footer for the old retaining wall along the base of Willis Hill (see Figure 15). The original walls beneath Brompton along the west side of the road, located just beyond the park property boundary, are also in good condition and visible from the Sunken Road landscape. In 2004, the park reconstructed two additional segments of the eastern stone wall on either side of the former site of the Stevens house. An approximately 165-foot segment was rebuilt running north to the Mercer Street intersection and a 240-foot segment running south towards the Civilian Conservation Corps-built wall, leaving a break for the pedestrian path from the parking lot (see Figures 18, 21). The historic wells atop Willis Hill and at the Martha Stevens house site remain, though their housings are contemporary. The Richardson house is not believed to have undergone any significant exterior modifications since 1965 (Figure 22).

All major buildings and structures from the early park development period also remain, and largely reflect their conditions at the end of the historic period. The primary exterior change to the Fredericksburg Visitor Center is a wheelchair ramp which was added ca. 1985 (Figure 23). The nearby maintenance building was converted into a bookstore and gift shop ca. 1992, and a ramp was added there as well (Figure 24). Both buildings, as well as the small brick storage building to the north, underwent exterior repairs in 2010-2011. The stone wall originally reconstructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps was restored ca. 1990 (Figure 25). However, there are apparently continuing issues with the original construction of the wall failing.

\*Feature described in National Register (draft)

Sunken Road Landscape  
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

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**Landscape Features:**

| Feature Name                                        | CLI Feature ID | Feature Contribution         | CRIS-HS Resource ID | Associated CRIS-AR ID | FMSS Record Type | FMSS Record Number | FMSS Exact Match |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Innis House* (#FR0153a)                             | 153761         | Contributing                 | 7871                |                       | Location         | 24235              | Yes              |
| Fredericksburg Visitor Center* (#FR0146d)           | 153853         | Contributing                 | 82069               |                       | Location         | 24233              | Yes              |
| Fredericksburg CCC Maintenance Building* (#FR0146c) | 153859         | Contributing                 | 82071               |                       | Location         | 24328              | Yes              |
| (Original) Stone Wall* (#FR0152d)                   | 153797         | Contributing                 | 82079               |                       | Location         | 94953              | Yes              |
| (Reconstructed) Stone Wall* (#FR0152c)              | 154263         | Contributing                 | 82080               |                       | Location         | 94949              | Yes              |
| Well, near Martha Stevens house site                | 153803         | Contributing                 |                     |                       | Asset            | 1321955            | No               |
| Well, south of Richardson house                     | 153819         | Contributing                 |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Visitor's Center Restroom* (#FR0146e)               | 153823         | Undetermined                 |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Richardson house/Montfort Academy* (#FR0151b)       | 153861         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Montfort Academy Garage                             | 153833         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |

**Landscape Characteristic Graphics:**



*Figure 22. Looking west at the berm atop Willis Hill which is believed to have subsumed three Civil War lunettes. The Richardson house/Montfort Academy, behind the berm, has been identified as a non-contributing resource (OCLP, 2011).*



*Figure 23. Looking northwest from Lafayette Boulevard at the Fredericksburg Visitor Center, modified ca. 1985 with a handicap ramp. The brick entry sign base dates to ca. 1940 (OCLP, 2011).*



Figure 24. Looking east at the Fredericksburg CCC Maintenance Building, now serving as a gift shop and exhibit space. The oak on the right is an original Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) planting (OCLP, 2011).

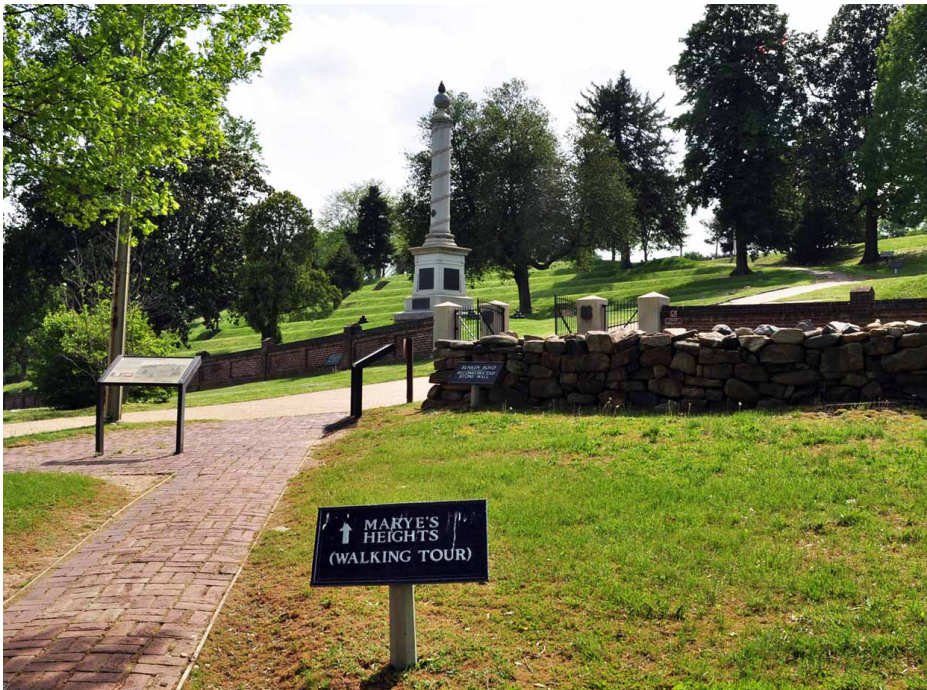


Figure 25. Looking west towards the south end of Sunken Road and the CCC-reconstructed stone wall, with the Fredericksburg National Cemetery in the distance. The two ID black and white tablets were installed ca. 1930 (OCLP, 2011).

**Landscape Characteristic: Small Scale Features**

Historic Conditions (through 1965):

Before the Civil War, and for some time afterward, small scale features within the Sunken Road landscape consisted primarily of domestic features such as hitching posts, clothes-lines, well housings, and various types of fencing. By the early 1880s, most of the original stone wall on the eastern side of Sunken Road had been removed, and replaced with wooden fencing in front of the Stevens and Innis properties. Around this time a series of utility poles were erected along the eastern side of the road. Along with the wiring they supported, the large poles made a strong visual impact within the Sunken Road corridor. These poles would later be removed in stages as parcels along the Sunken Road were acquired by the park and taken out of residential use.

In 1888, the first permanent memorial feature recognizing the historic battles appeared along Sunken Road, a monument to Confederate General Thomas R.R. Cobb of Georgia. Cobb had been mortally wounded during the First Battle of Fredericksburg while defending the position behind the stone wall, and the Cobb Monument, a simple three-foot tall granite stone, was placed by his family near where the General reportedly fell outside the Stevens house. This was followed in 1917 by a small granite stone honoring Martha Stevens herself for her reported ministering to wounded Confederate soldiers. It was placed at the site of her house, which had recently burned down, and faced Sunken Road.

With the dedication of the National Military Park in 1927, the focus began to shift from memorializing individuals to commemorating the battles themselves. In the early days of the park, commemoration was concentrated along roadways to maximize public access, as the battlefields were mostly private property. In 1927, five markers were placed beside roads and intersections by the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), including one at the southwest corner of Sunken Road and Hanover Street. Like the other UDC markers installed at this time, the Battle of Fredericksburg Marker consisted of a bronze tablet mounted on a mortared limestone block base. In the next few years, the War Department placed a series of ID tablets throughout the military park, directing visitors and marking important battlefield landmarks. Within the Sunken Road landscape, these tablets included two for the Sunken Road itself, one for a battlefield driving tour, and one for a Marye's Heights walking tour. The Sunken Road tablets were updated by the park in the late 1930s to identify the Civilian Conservation Corps-reconstructed stone wall.

While it had begun to take on a commemorative function, the Sunken Road landscape had also continued to develop as a residential neighborhood, with the concomitant accumulations of domestic small-scale features. While the residential landscapes along the east side of the road were essentially informal, sometime in the early twentieth-century a formal entranceway for the Willis Hill access road was built along the west side of Sunken Road. The entranceway included matched mortared stone gateposts and curving retaining walls. A similar entranceway was later added at the rear entrance to Brompton at an unknown date.

When the Civilian Conservation Corps completed the landscaping for the visitor center in 1937, it included a white plank fence surrounding the property on its east and north sides. No more than four feet high, the fence served to separate the institutional landscape from the surrounding residential neighborhood, but did nothing to screen one from the other. Other small scale features installed at this time included a white picket fence surrounding the small paved yard in front of the maintenance building. Two brick monolithic entrance signs facing Lafayette Boulevard were added ca. 1940, though the metal sign panels mounted on them have varied over the years as National Park Service graphic standards evolved. A flagpole was also installed behind the western entrance sign sometime before 1943.

The approaching centennial of the Civil War led to an effort by the park to provide expanded self-guided interpretation, including a series of tall, billboard-style signs installed in the late 1950s through early 1960s. These signs included narrative text panels, as well as an accompanying series of large-format paintings by artist Sidney King. At Sunken Road, signs were installed on the visitor center property, as well as along the road shoulder adjacent to the former Ebert house site, which had stood vacant for several years. The Ebert parcel was saved from development in 1964 by the University of Mary Washington, and the following year the Kirkland Monument was installed

on the site. The sculpture was crafted by sculptor Felix de Weldon, who had also created the famous Iwo Jima flag-raising monument for Washington D.C., and featured a bronze sculpture atop a polished granite base. It honored Sergeant Richard Kirkland, a young Confederate soldier who had brought water to wounded Union soldiers following the First Battle of Fredericksburg, earning him a legacy as “the Angel of Marye’s Heights.”

**Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:**

The monuments erected during the historic period all remain in good condition (Figure 26). The ID Tablets from the early phase of park development also remain, though some of them were replaced in-kind during the late historic period (see Figure 25). The metal panels on the historic brick entry signs in front of the visitor center were recently updated to meet the National Park Service’s Uniguide graphics standards. A flagpole still stands near the westernmost of the two entry signs, though it is unclear if it is the original. The other small scale features within the Sunken Road landscape today are primarily contemporary additions.

After Willis Hill was acquired by the park in 1997, a pair of cannon reproductions was placed in an approximation of the historic artillery locations, facing east to downtown Fredericksburg and the Bloody Plain (Figure 27). The Stevens house site and the Ebert house sites are currently marked with a series of sandstone blocks outlining the shape and location of the original structures (Figure 28). The historic water well at the Stevens house is covered with a concrete pad topped by a reconstructed wooden well housing. The Willis Hill water well is covered by a low wooden platform topped with a wooden lattice fence. A highly-visible culvert under the accessible path from the main parking lot to Sunken Road features dry-laid stone headwalls.

Signage is primarily a mix of standard metal directional signs and interpretive waysides. By the 1990s, a new style of interpretive wayside had come into use, which utilized panels which combined text and historic images, and were angled and set lower to the ground to preserve views of the landscape (see Figure 28). The park’s interpretive staff began to remove the King paintings in the 1990s as a preservation measure, and the other ca.1960 panels were phased out as well. One large-format painting apparently dating from the historic period remains just north of the visitor center, a bird’s eye view of the First Battle of Fredericksburg that may be part of the King series, but is not considered a contributing feature.

Various styles of contemporary fencing are utilized throughout the Sunken Road landscape, primarily along current or former property boundaries, but also to protect landscape features. Styles include split-rail fencing at the location of one of the earthwork remnants atop Willis Hill and at the intersection where the right-of-way from Mercer Street meets Sunken Road (Figure 29), board fencing along the west end of the current and former Willis Street residential lots, post-and-rail fencing surrounding the auxiliary parking lot, and chain-link fencing along the property boundary between Willis Hill and Brompton. Low, square wooden bollards are located at the north end of the rehabilitated Sunken Road segment where it meets Hanover Street, and at the west end of Kirkland Street near the Ebert house site. A contemporary metal gate is located at the base of the Willis Hill access road, set slightly uphill from the early twentieth-century stone entranceway along Sunken Road, which remains in good condition (see Figure 29).

\*Features described in National Register (draft)

**Landscape Features:**

| Feature Name                         | CLI Feature ID | Feature Contribution | CRIS-HS Resource ID | Associated CRIS-AR ID | FMSS Record Type | FMSS Record Number | FMSS Exact Match |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Martha Stevens Stone* (#FR0155c)     | 153877         | Contributing         | 82074               |                       | Location         | 24259              | Yes              |
| Martha Stevens Grave Urn* (#FR0155b) | 153883         | Contributing         |                     |                       | Asset            | 18454              | Yes              |

Sunken Road Landscape  
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|                                                                                        |        |                                 |       |  |          |         |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|-------|--|----------|---------|-----|
| Cobb Monument* (#FR0161)                                                               | 153899 | Contributing                    | 7869  |  | Location | 24257   | Yes |
| Battle of Fredericksburg UDC Marker* (#FR0156)                                         | 153969 | Contributing                    | 82081 |  | Location | 24255   | Yes |
| Kirkland Monument* (#FR0158)                                                           | 153913 | Contributing                    |       |  | Location | 24251   | Yes |
| ID Tablets* (#AU0275)<br>Sunken Road /<br>Reconstructed Stone Wall (2)                 | 153971 | Contributing                    | 82132 |  | Asset    | 17793   | Yes |
| ID Tablets* (#AU0275)<br>Marye's Heights (Walking<br>Tour) Battlefield Driving<br>Tour | 153973 | Contributing                    | 82135 |  |          |         | No  |
| Monolithic brick entrance<br>signs (2)                                                 | 153927 | Contributing                    |       |  | Asset    | 1321631 | Yes |
| Visitor Center flagpole                                                                | 153929 | Undetermined                    |       |  | Asset    | 1321629 | Yes |
| Willis Hill access road<br>stone entranceway                                           | 153977 | Undetermined                    |       |  |          |         | No  |
| Battle of Fredericksburg<br>ca.1960 painting                                           | 153979 | Noncontributing –<br>Compatible |       |  |          |         | No  |
| Montfort Academy access<br>road metal gate                                             | 153981 | Noncontributing –<br>Compatible |       |  |          |         | No  |
| Stone outlines of house<br>sites                                                       | 153923 | Noncontributing –<br>Compatible |       |  |          |         | No  |
| Willis Hill cannon (2)                                                                 | 153947 | Noncontributing –<br>Compatible |       |  |          |         | No  |
| Willis Hill well housing                                                               | 153949 | Noncontributing –<br>Compatible |       |  |          |         | No  |
| Stevens House site well<br>housing                                                     | 153951 | Noncontributing –<br>Compatible |       |  |          |         | No  |
| Contemporary signage                                                                   | 153959 | Noncontributing –<br>Compatible |       |  |          |         | No  |
| Contemporary benches                                                                   | 153961 | Noncontributing –<br>Compatible |       |  |          |         | No  |
| Contemporary fencing,<br>various                                                       | 153963 | Noncontributing –<br>Compatible |       |  |          |         | No  |
| Contemporary Sunken<br>Road bollards                                                   | 153965 | Noncontributing –<br>Compatible |       |  |          |         | No  |
| Culvert headwalls on path<br>from parking I                                            | 153975 | Noncontributing –<br>Compatible |       |  |          |         | No  |

**Landscape Characteristic Graphics:**



Figure 26. Top, from left to right: Cobb Monument, Martha Stevens Stone, and Battle of Fredericksburg United Daughters of the Confederacy Marker. Bottom: Martha Stevens Grave Urn, Kirkland Monument (OCLP, 2011).



Figure 27. Looking northeast at the two replica cannon placed atop Willis Hill to interpret the Confederate artillery positions during the First Battle of Fredericksburg (OCLP, 2011).



*Figure 28. Looking south at contemporary small scale features at the Martha Stevens house site, including stone marking the house's historic footprint, interpretive wayside, and reconstructed well housing (OCLP, 2011).*



*Figure 29. Looking northeast at the remnants of Confederate earthworks on Willis Hill, with the entrance to the Montfort Academy access road in the background. Note the contemporary split rail fencing to protect the resource (OCLP, 2011).*

**Historic and Existing Conditions:**

At the time of the Civil War, views to the east from both Sunken Road and Willis Hill were extensive, stretching across gently-sloped fields to downtown Fredericksburg and the Rappahannock River. The eastward and southward views from the top of Willis Hill were of major strategic import to the battles, as they left the approaching Union troops vulnerable to Confederate attack from the heights above. Westward oriented views appear to have been mixed. An irregular screen of evergreen trees at the base of Willis Hill and small trees scattered across its eastern slope likely allowed filtered views to the top of the hill from Sunken Road and the plain to the east. The base of Marye's Hill below Brompton was also planted with evergreen trees, but these were fairly widely spaced, and the mansion could likely be clearly seen from Sunken Road.

Views from Sunken Road and Willis Hill changed dramatically over the course of the historic period due to the urbanization of the surrounding area. In the decades after the Civil War, dense residential development began to replace the open fields east of the road, and by the end of the historic period, the only parts of historic downtown Fredericksburg still visible from the top of Willis Hill were the church steeples that were present by the time of the battles. While the character of this view was markedly different than it had been in 1862, the steeples rising above the sea of homes and mature shade trees and the ridgeline of Stafford Heights beyond provided a reference point to the Civil War era landscape. From Sunken Road itself, views to the east were largely to the residential neighborhood, except along the visitor center property where they were largely screened from view by the matured Civilian Conservation Corps plantings. Westward views changed as well as the plantings along the eastern slope of Willis Hill and Marye's Hill matured, but by the end of the historic period filtered views up the hills could once more be had from the road and the properties along its eastern side.

Today, the major views and vistas at Sunken Road remain much as they were at the end of the historic period in 1965, if not at the time of the Civil War. Stafford Heights and the steeples of downtown Fredericksburg may still be seen from atop Willis Hill (see Figures 18, 27). While Brompton is not open to the public, the vista to the mansion atop the open slope of Marye's Hill contributes to the historic character of the northern portion of the Sunken Road landscape (Figure 30). The largest change to the views of the late historic period may be found looking north and south along Sunken Road, where the post-Civil War residential development has been removed in favor of restoring open character.

**Landscape Features:**

| Feature Name                                          | CLI Feature ID | Feature Contribution | CRIS-HS Resource ID | Associated CRIS-AR ID | FMSS Record Type | FMSS Record Number | FMSS Exact Match |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| View from Willis Hill east to downtown Fredericksburg | 154201         | Contributing         |                     |                       | Asset            | 1322033            | Yes              |
| Vista of Brompton from Sunken Road                    | 153997         | Contributing         |                     |                       | Asset            | 1322032            | Yes              |

**Landscape Characteristic Graphics:**



*Figure 30. Vista looking northwest from the Sunken Road to Brompton atop Marye's Hill, a major landmark during both Civil War battles at Fredericksburg (OCLP, 2011).*

**Landscape Characteristic: Archeological Sites**

The Sunken Road landscape is rich in widely-distributed archaeological resources, ranging from the early eighteenth century development of the landscape as farmland to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century period of urbanization. Since the early 1960s, archeological testing has been carried out on the Ebert House site, Stevens House site, the Howison Mill site, the top of Willis Hill, and along the shoulders of Sunken Road itself. Most of the archaeological resources which have been identified as significant are directly or indirectly related to the battles that occurred at Fredericksburg during the Civil War. No resources have yet been identified relating to American Indian usage or early European settlement.

The National Register February 2010 draft documentation identifies sixteen individual archeological sites within the Sunken Road landscape. Of these, nine are identified as contributing to the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park district. These are the Sunken Road and Walls site (#FR0152b), Ebert House site (#FR0157), Martha Stevens house site (#FR0155a), Innis house property (#FR0153b), the Washington Artillery and Willis Plantation Complex (#FR0149a) atop Willis Hill, the Howison's Mill Complex (#FR0148a), the Wellford Quarry (#FR0148f), an isolated quarry pit (NR#FR0148c), and an excavated spring head and structural platform (possibly tent location) and associated berm (NR #FR0148b) in the Howison's Mill area. The Willis/Wellford Family Cemetery (#FR0149b), while not on park-owned land, is also identified in the National Register documentation as contributing to the district.

\*Features described in National Register (draft)

Sunken Road Landscape  
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**Landscape Features:**

| Feature Name                                                                  | CLI Feature ID | Feature Contribution         | CRIS-HS Resource ID | Associated CRIS-AR ID | FMSS Record Type | FMSS Record Number | FMSS Exact Match |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Sunken Road and Walls site* (#FR0152b)                                        | 154035         | Contributing                 |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Ebert House site* (#FR0157)                                                   | 154053         | Contributing                 |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Martha Stevens House site* (#FR0155a)                                         | 154203         | Contributing                 |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Innis House (surrounding site)* (#FR0153b)                                    | 154205         | Contributing                 |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Washington Artillery and Willis Plantation Complex* (#FR0149a)                | 154207         | Contributing                 |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Howison's Mill Complex* (#FR0148a)                                            | 154209         | Contributing                 |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Excavated spring head, structural platform and associated berm* (NR #FR0148b) | 154211         | Contributing                 |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Wellford Quarry* (#FR0148f)                                                   | 154213         | Contributing                 |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Isolated quarry pit* (#FR0148c)                                               | 154215         | Contributing                 |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Upland impoundment at Howison's Mill Locale* (#FR0148d)                       | 154217         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Unidentified structure platforms* (#FR0148e) at Howison's Mill locale         | 154219         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| M.G. Willis House site* (#FR0149c)                                            | 154221         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Jaqueline Inge House site* (#FR0154)                                          | 154231         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Unidentified structure (south of Stevens house site)* (#FR0149d)              | 154233         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Willis Street Complex* (#FR0142)                                              | 154235         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |
| Montfort Academy (20th century complex)* (#FR0151a)                           | 154237         | Noncontributing – Compatible |                     |                       |                  |                    | No               |



## Condition

**Assessment Interval (Years):** 6

**Next Assessment Due Date:** 03/25/2031

### Condition Assessment and Impacts

**Condition Assessment:** Good

**Assessment Date:** 03/25/2025

#### Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

The overall landscape is well-maintained and in good condition.

**Condition Assessment:** Good

**Assessment Date:** 09/21/2021

#### Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

Provisional. The condition reassessment for this CLI has been delayed due to Covid-19 travel restrictions and staffing shortages. In the meantime, the most recent condition assessment will remain in place until it is reassessed as part of a comprehensive update of the entire CLI. Planning and scheduling this update will occur in FY 2022.

**Condition Assessment:** Good

**Assessment Date:** 09/19/2011

#### Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

The Sunken Road landscape is in overall good condition, showing no clear evidence of major negative disturbance or deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Major rehabilitation work has been carried out in recent years, including the removal of non-historic buildings, the reconstruction by the Drystone Conservancy of two sections of the historic eastern stone wall, and the rehabilitation of Sunken Road itself after the city of Fredericksburg relinquished its right-of-way within the park boundary in 2004.

Certain features do warrant attention, and two of these have already been entered into the Project Management Information System (PMIS). The portion of reconstructed stone wall built by the Civilian Conservation Corps is slowly deteriorating, and the loss of stones has resulted in a noticeable reduction in the wall's height. This work is included in the project entitled "Relocate Visitor Center Parking Lot and Restore Cultural Landscape" (PMIS #156789). While most paths are hard-surfaced, the grass pathways atop Willis Hill have been worn to bare ground in places by pedestrian use. This is included in the project entitled "Upgrade Tour Trails in Historic Areas with Hardened Surface" (PMIS #163044). The third issue is erosion on the southwest slope of Willis Hill, which poses a potential threat to the archeological resources within the Howison's Mill area, as well as the stability of the adjacent Fredericksburg National Cemetery, but has not yet been entered into the PMIS.

## Impacts

**Type of Impact:** Adjacent Lands

**Other Impact:**

**External or Internal:** External

**Impact Narrative:** University of Mary Washington has indicated intentions of expanding its athletic complex northwest of Willis Hill. This could have major negative impacts on views from Willis Hill and potentially Sunken Road itself.

**Date Identified:** 09/25/2011

**Type of Impact:** Deferred Maintenance

**Other Impact:**

**External or Internal:** Internal

**Impact Narrative:** The portion of stone wall reconstructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps has lost stones, reducing its historic height.

**Date Identified:** 09/25/2011

**Type of Impact:** Erosion

**Other Impact:**

**External or Internal:** Internal

**Impact Narrative:** The southwest slope of Willis Hill is eroding, potentially endangering archaeological resources in the Howison's Mill area.

**Date Identified:** 09/25/2011

## Treatment

### **Stabilization Measures**

## **Treatment Documents**

**Treatment Type:** Preservation

**Treatment Completed:** No

**Document Type:** General Management Plan

**Document Date:** 1986-01-01

**Title:**

**IRMA Link:**

**Narrative:**

The park's 1986 General Management Plan (GMP) currently provides the most up-to-date treatment guidance for the Sunken Road landscape. While the plan was completed before the acquisition of certain key parcels within the Sunken Road landscape, it offers general direction on cultural resources management.

The 1986 plan identified three management zones for the park: Historic, Park Development, and Special Use, each of which was divided up into multiple subzones. At the time the plan was approved, individual components of what today comprises the Sunken Road landscape fell into multiple zones and subzones. The Fredericksburg Battlefield visitor center landscape was classified as "Educational/Interpretive Development Subzone" within the Park Development Zone, with management emphasis on providing visitor services and interpretation with minimum intrusion on the historic surroundings. At the time the plan was approved, the historic significance of the visitor center had not yet been assessed. Willis Hill, the Ebert house site, and the residential lots on the west side of Willis Street were all still privately-owned, and fell under the Special Use Zone, with an emphasis on cooperating with their owners to minimize incompatible uses and intrusions on the historic scene. Like approximately eighty-five percent of the park's total authorized acreage, the remainder of the Sunken Road landscape was classified as a "Preservation Subzone" within the Historic Zone. Here the management emphasis was to be on the preservation of historic and archaeological resources, and the interpretation of the battles to visitors. Historic buildings and sites were to be identified and stabilized, vegetation was to be removed or planted as necessary to approximate the historic scene at the time of the battles, and modern development, with the exception of informational signage, was to be kept to a minimum.

While there was no "rehabilitation zone" identified in the 1986 plan, the stated overall cultural resource management objective was to "(i)dentify, evaluate, protect, maintain, and interpret the park's cultural resources to preserve their original fabric and workmanship and, where necessary, stabilize and rehabilitate them in a manner consistent with legislative mandates and NPS policies," (1986 GMP, 98). At Sunken Road, important rehabilitation work has already taken place, but the process is ongoing as additional lands within the authorized boundary are acquired. Three of the residences on Willis Street, which were specifically identified for acquisition and removal in the 1986 plan, remain privately-held. Willis Hill was acquired by the park in 1997, but has not yet been rehabilitated to reflect its character at the time of the battles.

The park is currently working on a new general management plan revisiting recommendations from previous park planning, taking into account both new land acquisitions and the park's evolving physical and cultural context. When approved, this plan will provide the approach for future landscape treatment for the Sunken Road landscape.

**Approved Treatment Costs**

**Cost Narrative:**



## Bibliography and Supplemental Information

### Bibliography:

| Citation Author           | Citation Title                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Year of Publication | Citation Publisher                                            | Citation Type | Citation Location | Citation Number |
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Sunken Road Landscape  
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Sunken Road Landscape  
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

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**Supplemental Information:**

**Supplemental Information Title:** Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970 collection, ProQuest, LLC.

**Supplemental Information Narrative:**

Fredericksburg, Virginia, June 1919; Fredericksburg, Virginia, February 1927; Fredericksburg, Virginia, February 1927 (corrected May 1947)

**Landscape Documents:**

| File Name                                                      | Date | Attachment Type |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----------------|
| FRSP_Ellwood-Cemetery-Sunken Road_CLI<br>Update Notes_2025.pdf |      |                 |

| Source |
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