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# IVY HILL CEMETERY HISTORICAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Dedicated to the preservation of monuments, promotion of history, and protection of flora and fauna of Ivy Hill Cemetery

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NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2011

## Civil War Stories

*Discovering History from Those Who Lived It.*



Imagine ... It is 1861, and you are facing a threat. Either you have been sent away from your home to Alexandria, Virginia to enforce the will of a young country, or you have awakened to find your hometown invaded by federal troops. Either way you meet the unknown,

perhaps on a hillside above the port of Alexandria.

Soldiers are encamped around Shooter's Hill. Nearby, the old Smith Farm that became Ivy Hill Cemetery a couple of years ago, is no longer quiet. (see *Civil War*, p.4)

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*FROM THE CEMETERY PRESIDENT*

*BEST FRIENDS*

*BY TOM BOWLING*



Almost everyone likes a stroll at Ivy Hill. It is a place of beauty and solace. Many folks also enjoy a walk with their canine best friend -- another fine activity. However, these two pursuits do not work well together. Every pup has needs on his walk that violate the rules of decorum which help keep Ivy Hill a lovely place.

We would like to encourage walkers to explore and enjoy Ivy Hill, but without their canine escorts. In the hopes of providing good temporary substitutes for our dogs, the Society is starting a weekly Walking Group. Please see *Upcoming Events* on *p.3* for details.

The successful World War II story usually ends with the daring escape. After a harrowing time, our hero returns to his unit or his home and all is well. But our real life heroes don't always stop there.

George A. Schelhorn, II was awarded a Purple Heart, a Bronze Star and a Silver Star. This is his story.

Cpl. George Schelhorn's assignment that day was to accompany a Captain to visit front line troops as part of his mapping duties at divisional headquarters. The Corporal drove their jeep through towns they thought our troops had already passed through. All seemed normal until they caught sight of a column of German soldiers.

Using Schelhorn's carbine, the officer fired on the troops who dispersed without returning fire, and the two men were able to return to the town. There they found and captured several German soldiers and transported them to a hospital to be guarded. But when they left to continue their mission, they were ambushed.

After returning fire and taking cover, Schelhorn was grazed by a bullet and his officer decided they should surrender. Encouraged by a friendlier attitude than he had expected from the Germans, Schelhorn exaggerated his wound and was left behind at a hospital.

He was not to stay there long. A soldier in German uniform approached Schelhorn in the hospital ward and confided that he was French and had been impressed into the Army. When he confessed that he wanted to surrender, Schelhorn talked him into a creative plan.

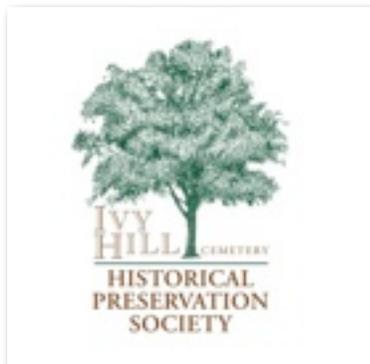
The two unlikely conspirators commandeered a motorcycle, rode through occupied territory and past roadblocks posing as American prisoner and German captor. The Frenchman successfully surrendered when they reached Schelhorn's unit. But this was not the end.

The next day, the Corporal decided to return with two PFCs to the area of his ambush to retrieve the weapons they had gathered from the captured soldiers. A German nurse he had befriended the previous day told him that the town was not cleared, but that German soldiers were still there. The three men returned to the American lines and found a Lieutenant to assist them. Together they routed six soldiers in the town, ordered the mayor to collect weapons, and continued on to find and capture the Germans who had ambushed the Americans the previous day.

The military newspaper account of these feats behind enemy lines, along with a letter home from the young Corporal later in the War, are posted on the Society website [ihchps.org](http://ihchps.org) as *Escape and Letter Home*. Thank you to Becky Dunlop, George Schelhorn's daughter, for all biographical information.



Corporal George Schelhorn  
January 16, 1924 - May 2, 1973



TOUR AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD

VISIT [IHCHPS.ORG](http://ihchps.org)

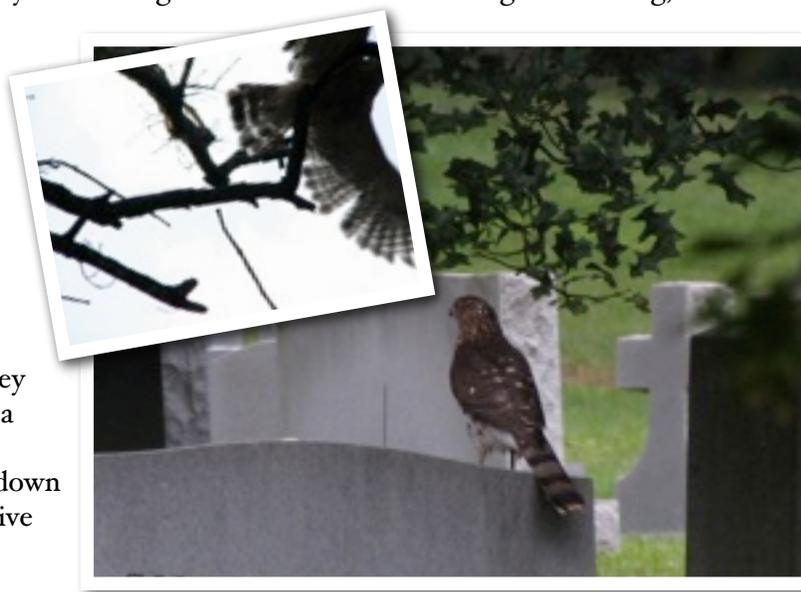
The first Self-guided Tour of Ivy Hill's historical highlights is ready for download and use. Visit [ihchps.org](http://ihchps.org) or [Ivyhill.org](http://Ivyhill.org) online and click on the tree logo to navigate to the Self-Guided Tour download. An expanded narrative about each stop on the tour will also be posted in April.

A Civil War Tour will be available for download in May that will detail the lives of the veterans of that conflict. To arrange a guided tour for a group, please email [tara@ihchps.org](mailto:tara@ihchps.org).

## RED-TAILED HAWK

Residential real estate agents will find a lot to admire about red-tailed hawks because one thing they take very seriously is choosing a nest site. Both the male and female participate in scoping out an area, often deciding on the highest tree available for a new nest or for renovation of an old one.

These birds of prey use their “room with a view” to help with hunting. They glide down in a slow contained dive to grab snakes, small rodents and rarely (because they prefers mammals) other birds. Fortunately, an attack on a dog or cat is most unlikely.



Sources: [www.pwconserve.org/wildlife/birds/redtailedhawk.htm](http://www.pwconserve.org/wildlife/birds/redtailedhawk.htm) & [www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org)

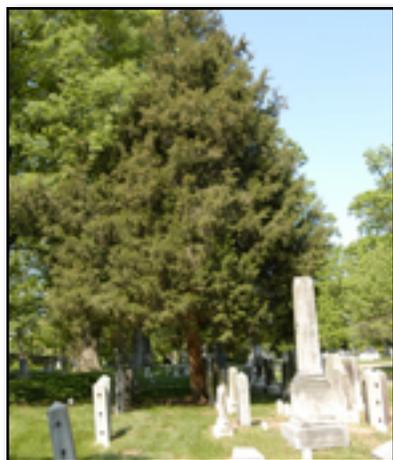
## BUTEO JAMAICENSIS

Good at keeping the rodent population under control, the buteo hawks are also beautiful to watch, soaring and circling, with tails fanned and broad wings stretched to catch an air draft.

Aggressive during breeding season, they will defend their territory with vigor.

The Ivy Hill red-tailed hawk pictured here is a juvenile, his tail markings still brown and banded. He likes Ivy Hill for its stream bed, as well as its open spaces.

## EASTERN RED CEDAR



Tree 68, Southern edge of Section G at Ivy Hill

In this edition we will revisit the cedars at Ivy Hill in honor of Frank Stringfellow. The red cedars are actually a type of juniper that provides food and shelter to a variety of wildlife. Birds find it a safe and sheltered nesting spot; deer feed on the young cones and buds.

The red cedar sometimes shelters more than just birds and small animals. In the western U.S., black bears have been known to use hollowed out western cedars for their winter dens. Similarly, Frank Stringfellow once hid under a fallen cedar to avoid capture after being

surprised and chased by Union soldiers while on patrol.

Though concerned with more pressing matters at the time, Stringfellow may have noticed how aromatic his surroundings were. The eastern red cedar’s oils have a strong fragrance pleasing to most humans but repellent to insects. This characteristic accounts for its use as a closet and drawer liner.

Herbalists use red cedar to treat ailments from asthma to rashes and brew a tea to heal headaches.

Source: [http://www.eborw.com/about\\_6644821\\_interesting-red-cedar-tree.html](http://www.eborw.com/about_6644821_interesting-red-cedar-tree.html)

## JUNIPERUS

### UPCOMING EVENTS: FOAA TOURS, CIVIL WAR MARKER CLEANING, WALKING GROUP FORMING

- April 2 10 AM & 1 PM Friends of Alexandria Archaeology Civil War Tours; Visit [FOAA](#)\* to join the group
- April 17 10 AM Care of Civil War Grave Markers; Visit the Society website email [tara@ihchps.org](mailto:tara@ihchps.org) or call 703.626.4837 to join us to learn how to clean and care for historic markers and gravestones
- April 26 The Weekly Walking Group will form at 9:30 AM in the Circle of Honor; Contact us at [tara@ihchps.org](mailto:tara@ihchps.org) for more details or to help plan our walks

\*<http://apps.alexandriava.gov/Calendar/?sl=55>

# Civil War Profile

## Benjamin Franklin “Frank” Stringfellow

(Continued from p.1)

Union troops maneuver through the rolling hills, perhaps watched by Confederate spies.

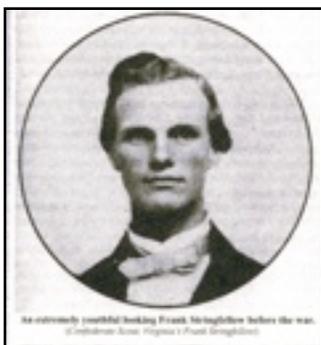
In 2011, we have no record of the daily actions witnessed at Ivy Hill by the troops on both sides of the War. We do know there was enough activity here to warrant a request for reimbursement for damages from the government at the end of the war.

We also know that 72 soldiers who fought in the Civil War were eventually laid to rest at Ivy Hill, along with some of their peers who played other roles in the war. For their place in history, as well as its location, Ivy Hill has been named a Virginia Civil War destination for the Sesquicentennial Commemoration. We will profile a Civil War personality in each of the newsletters over during the commemoration. Their personal stories paint vivid images of the time. A fascinating person to start their stories is Frank Stringfellow.

The lure about Benjamin Franklin “Frank” Stringfellow, a Confederate Confidential Scout, abounds. One of the more outrageous stories has Stringfellow, a relatively small man, using the his surroundings well by hiding under the generous skirt of an Alexandria miss while Union soldiers searched the premises during one of his spy missions.

In fact his size – only about 100 pounds and under five foot, eight – nearly kept him out of the fray completely. When he volunteered to fight for the Confederate States of America, he was looked at askance for

his puny stature and summarily turned down. He decided to prove his potential value by scoping out a Confederate encampment and later capturing three guards whom he marched in and presented to their commanding officer as his prisoners.\* His plan worked and he began his service in the CSA army.



His reputation was built upon a series of daring actions. According to *This Forgotten Land II* by Donald C. Hakenson and *Confederate Scout, Virginia's Frank Stringfellow* by James Dudley Peavey, he came to the attention of J.E.B. Stuart who asked Stringfellow to become his personal scout. While in that post, he met fellow scout John S. Mosby who would later lead the group that came to be known as Mosby's Rangers. In 1864, he overheard Mosby state his desire to see the play *The Guerilla, Mosby and 500 Sutler Wagons*, that was playing to sold-out crowds in Alexandria. Stringfellow decided to ride on horseback all night to reach the city; gather intelligence from casual conversation with Union soldiers while there; attend the play that night and ride back to the encampment, all within 36 hours. Mosby was impressed. Stuart referred to Stringfellow as, “A young man of extraordinary merit.”

He spent the war gathering intelligence in many creative ways. More than once he posed as a dentist's assistant and a young woman, and eluded capture by hiding in an attic and under a fallen tree.\* After evading his enemies multiple times, even successfully capturing his pursuers on occasion, he was eventually captured and exchanged for a Union soldier.

### Contributors



Thank you to Don Hakenson for Frank Stringfellow

bkrd & photo; Scott Saltgaver for the Ivy Hill photos & to for the Becky Dunlop for *Feature Profile* information

### VOLUNTEERS



Special thanks to the Society Volunteers who prepare the mailed

version of the newsletter.

To nominate someone for a profile article, please email [tara@ibchps.org](mailto:tara@ibchps.org).

He escaped to Canada near the end of the war, after having being captured again by Union troops. He stayed with our northern neighbors for a time after the war while a \$10,000 reward was offered for his recapture.

By the time he returned to the States, his goals had changed. This graduate of Episcopal High School married his Alexandria sweetheart, Emma Green in 1867, entered the Virginia Seminary and was ordained an Episcopal priest in 1876. He was later able to enlist as a chaplain in the Spanish-American War despite his age of 57. To this end, he provided President McKinley with a letter from President Grant which stated that any U.S. President would be willing to honor a request from Stringfellow for his refraining from shooting General Grant when he had the chance to do so during the Civil War.

(Continued on p.5)

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## FRANK STRINGFELLOW

(CONTINUED FROM P.4)

Stringfellow had conveyed the story to Grant, telling him of the opportunity he had refused to take, hoping it would be meaningful to Grant.

Stringfellow died in Alexandria in 1913 from a heart attack. His tombstone, in the tradition of all confederate soldiers' graves, is pointed at the top reportedly in order to prevent Union soldiers and sympathizers from sitting on it.

Every grave marker has a story and a walk or ride through the beautiful rolling scenery at Ivy Hill is an enjoyable way to engage history. On April 2, the Historical Society will conduct the inaugural Civil War guided tour of Ivy Hill for the Friends of Alexandria Archaeology.

A self-guided tour of the gravesites, along with life stories of the veterans, will also be available for download from the Society website in May.

The primary source of biographical information for the tour is culled with permission from the 2010 book, *This Forgotten Land II* by Donald C. Hakenson.

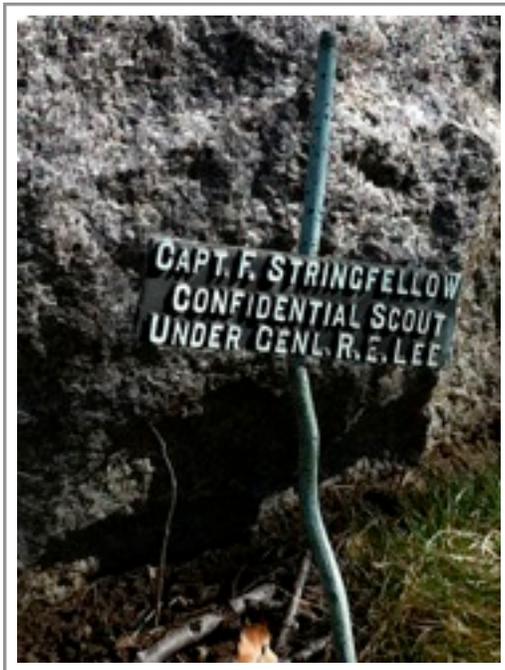


\* Additional source: <http://www.myhenrycounty.com/frank-stringfellow.php>

For more information about the April 2 tour or the Historical Society, visit [www.ihchps.org](http://www.ihchps.org) or write with questions to [tara@ihchps.org](mailto:tara@ihchps.org).

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## CAPTAIN FRANK STRINGFELLOW



CONFIDENTIAL SCOUT FOR J.E.B. STUART UNDER GENERAL R.E. LEE