

Town & County

A Soldier's Art

A Union mapmaker's eye for detail gives a frontlines look at the Civil War in Virginia. Robert Sneden's artwork and memoirs—only recently rediscovered—leave a colorful legacy. Although Sneden was not present at the Battle of Chancellorsville (below), he drew a conjectural scene from the beginning of the battle, based on reports from his New York regiment. **Page 8**



Former Glory

A tiny, forgotten cemetery at Fawn Lake in Spotsylvania County is all that remains of a once-flourishing 19th-century plantation. **Page 3**



Family Meals

Parents give their children more than food at the family table, says a Spotsylvania County Extension agent. **Page 13**

Local History



DON BOWERS

Richard Estes, who died in 1832, is buried in Greenfield Cemetery. Estes built Greenfield Plantation after the Revolutionary War.

*Crumbling
gravestones
are all that
remain of a
onetime
bustling
antebellum
plantation
in
Spotsylvania.*

Pillars to the past

HIDDEN BEHIND THE DAM that holds back the water of Fawn Lake in the northwestern section of Spotsylvania County is a very small, unkempt and forgotten family cemetery.

The cemetery is the only visible evidence of the once-thriving antebellum Southern plantation known as Greenfield.

Those who rest in this tiny plot of Spotsylvania County soil off State Route 621 represent three different centuries of American history, according to a history of the cemetery in the Spotsylvania County Museum.

The graveyard is known as the Greenfield Cemetery and is the family burial ground of Richard Estes (1758-1832) and his descendants. Estes was a Revolutionary War soldier who fought for the freedom of the colonies. He built Greenfield Plantation on 2,100 acres of land, a portion of which is now the Fawn Lake residential community.

Upon his death in 1832, Estes was buried in this cemetery, where the inscription on his headstone is



**THE WAY
IT WAS**

Don
Bowers

still legible. He is buried between his first wife, who preceded him in death (1822) and his second wife, who survived him by six years (1838). The three graves are the oldest of the 15 grave sites in Greenfield, four of which are unmarked.

Shortly after Estes died, Absalom Row, an Orange County native, purchased Greenfield Plantation from his father-in-law's estate. Row had married Estes' daughter, Nancy, in 1825.

Row not only managed the busy plantation, but also is referred to as a gold-miner. At the time, there were a number of gold mines in the area and gold was panned from a stream running through the plantation. The files of the museum reveal that a wedding ring of one of Row's

Local History



DON BOWERS

The tiny Greenfield Cemetery rests behind the Fawn Lake dam in Spotsylvania County. Once, it was part of a 2,100-acre plantation. Graves there represent three different centuries of American history.

PILLARS TO THE PAST: GRAVES POINT WAY TO FORMER GLORY

FROM PAGE 3

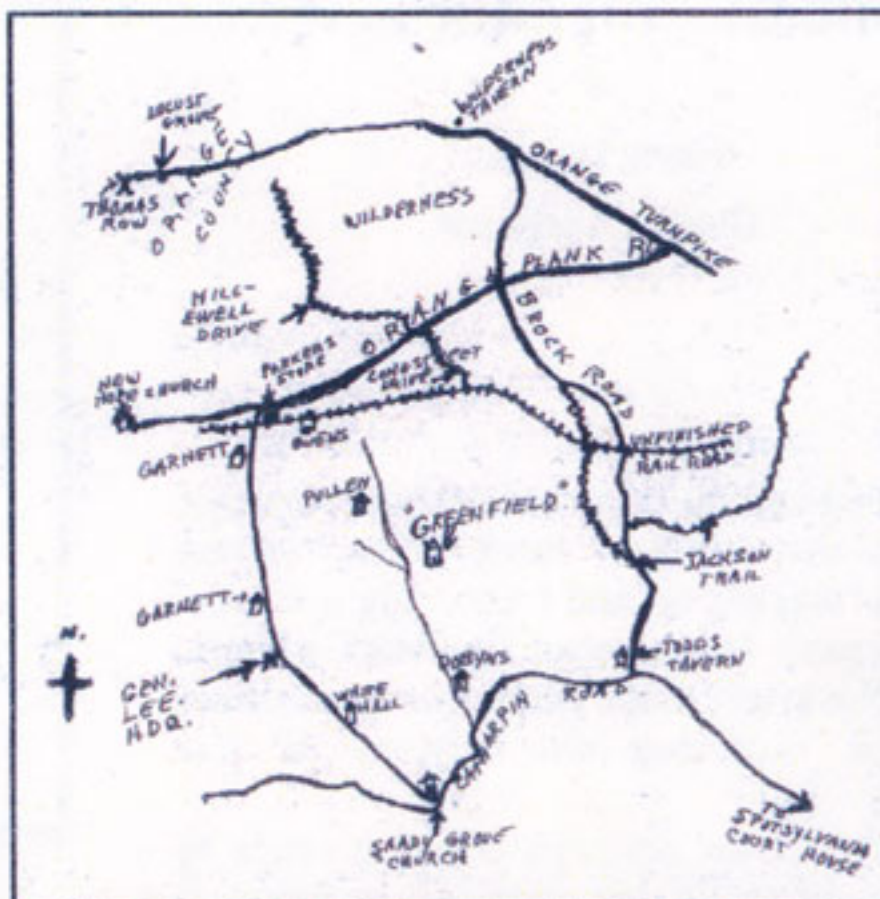
daughters was forged from the gold found on the plantation.

In a letter Absalom wrote to a relative in Illinois, dated June 30, 1832, he writes in regard to his gold ventures, "we are doing a safe business, though not a brilliant one." He goes on to say "several valuable discoveries have been made lately . . . one in Culpeper, which if reports are to be relied on, is much more brilliant than herefore discovered."

Greenfield Plantation was the home of the Row family for about 75 years, or until about 1900. Under the supervision of Absalom Row and, later, his unmarried daughter, Nancy, or Nannie as she was called, Greenfield was a prominent and flourishing Spotsylvania County plantation.

Neither Absalom nor Nancy Row, his wife, are buried in Greenfield Cemetery, which raises the question of why—especially since Nannie, their unmarried daughter who lived to be 58 years of age, is laid to rest there.

A son of Absalom and Nancy, George Washington Estes Row, is also buried in the graveyard, as is his wife, Mary E. Houston.



Hand-drawn map by a former Greenfield resident shows the plantation's location in the middle of an important section of Spotsylvania County during the Civil War. Both Confederate and Union troops passed through the plantation on their way to the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse in May 1864.

Mary, a native of Rockbridge County was related to Texas governor and U.S. Sen. Sam Houston.

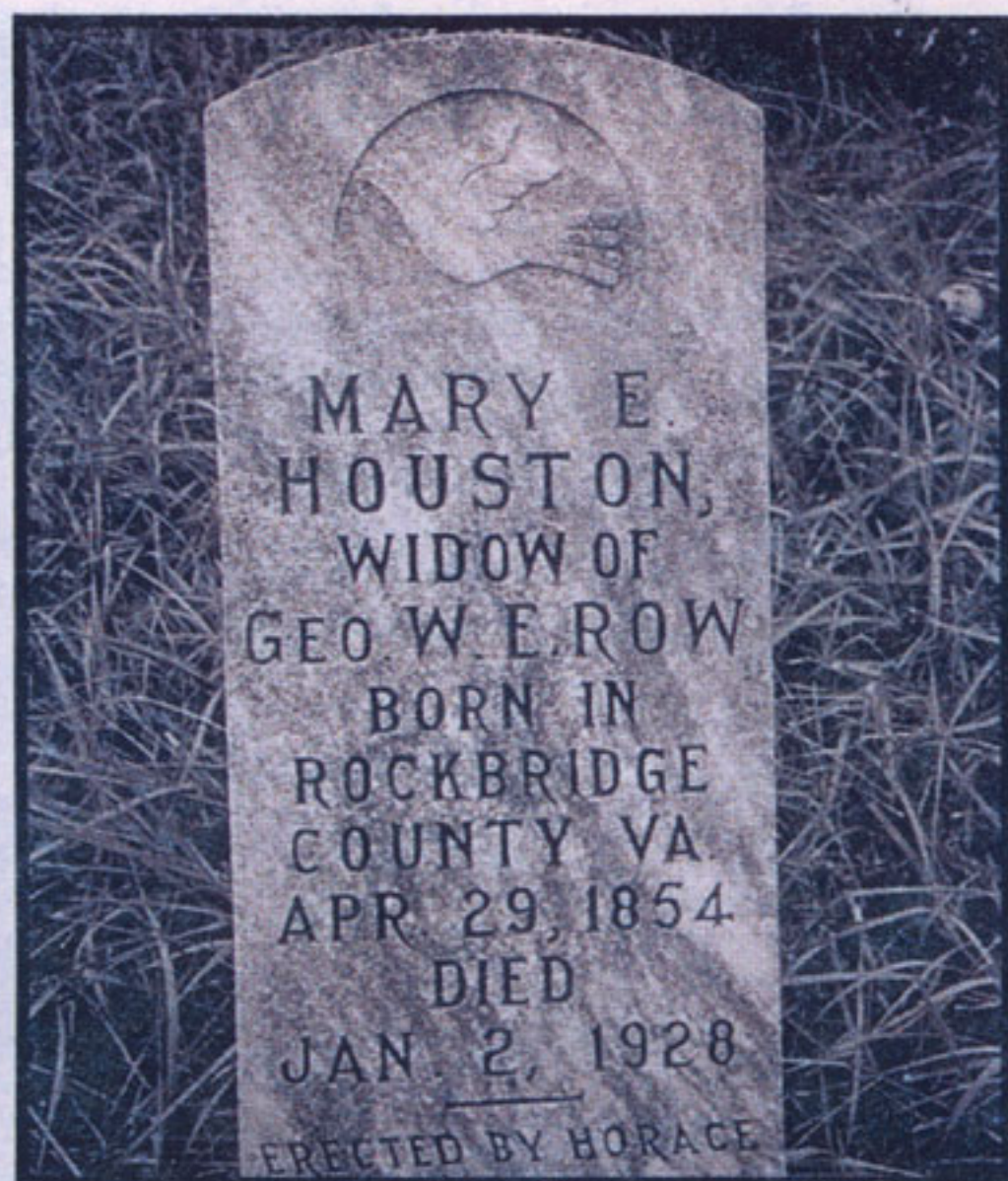
Like everyone who lived in Spotsylvania County during the Civil War, the Row family was tremendously impacted by the conflict. Greenfield never fully recovered its prewar prosperity.

In May 1864, after the Battle of the Wilderness, both Confederate and Union troops passed through the plantation on their way to Spotsylvania Courthouse and the fourth and final major Civil War battle to be fought in the Fredericksburg–Spotsylvania County area.

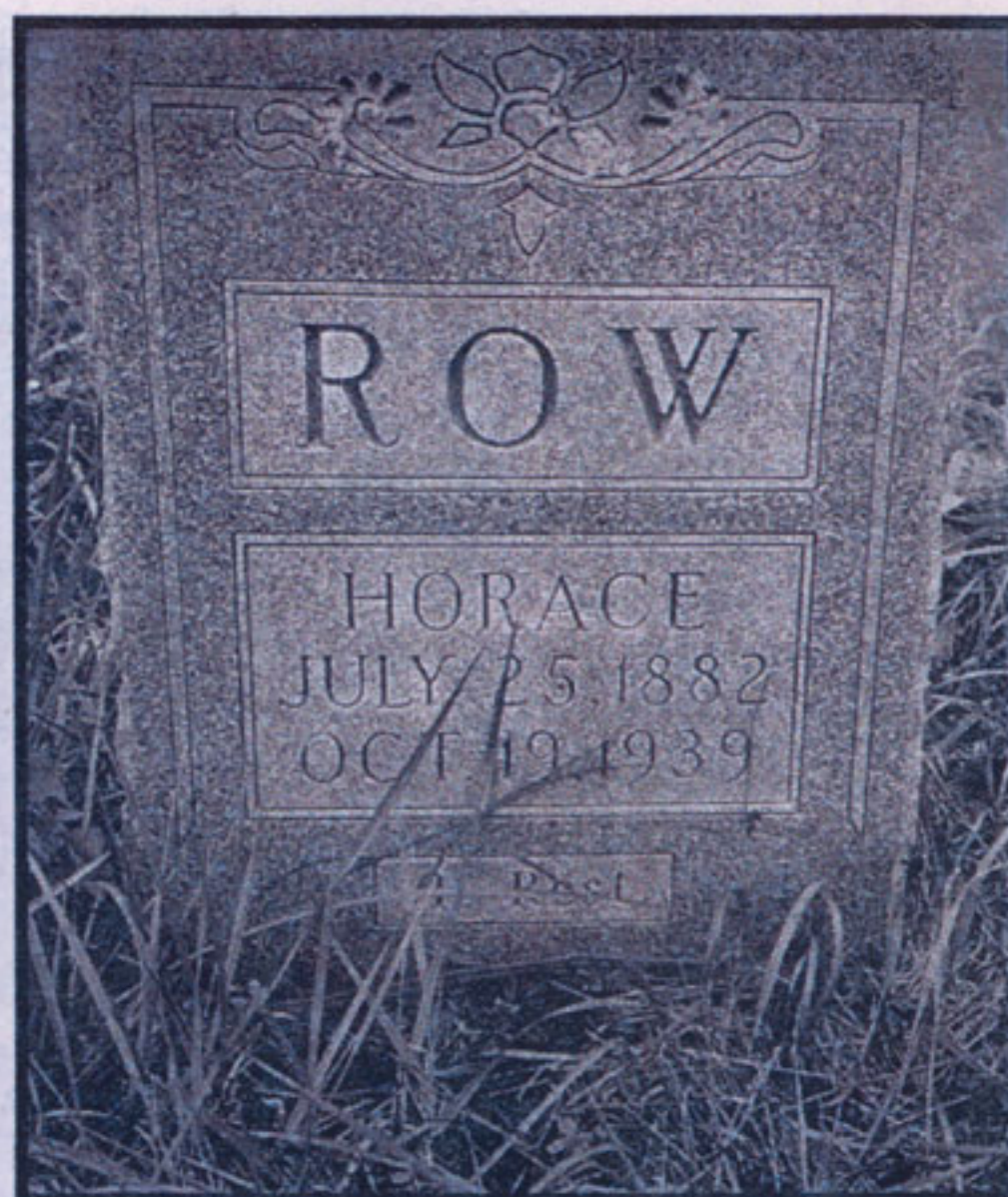
All the family valuables were buried to save them from Union soldiers. The plantation was severely looted and crops and livestock destroyed by Federal forces. The main residence and buildings of the plantation, however, were spared.

During the fighting, Nannie Row and "perhaps other members of the family" moved to Goochland County, to escape the tumult, according to the museum's files. In a letter written by Maria Dobyns of adjoining Oakley

Local History



Mary E. Houston, the wife of George Washington Estes Row, was related to Texas political legend Sam Houston.



The last to be buried at Greenfield Cemetery was Horace Row, the great-grandson of the plantation founder. Horace Row gave land to Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park to preserve the Jackson Trail.

DON BOWERS PHOTOS

Plantation to Nannie, a description is given of widespread suffering, destruction, and harassment.

Excerpts from the letter include: "They [Yankees] came, searching the meat house, took all we had, including the flour . . . they broke open the house and searched it from top to bottom at least fifty times, broke open every door except the parlor, took every grain of corn and left us without one dust of flour . . . nearly all our meat, every fowl we had, both carriages, all of the horses, played destruction generally . . . several cursed us and in fact I believe they were the worst that ever lived."

Greenfield Plantation contained all the facilities necessary to run a 19th-century plantation including a shoe shop, blacksmith shop, carriage shed, carpenter shop, weaving house, barn, summer kitchen as well as the main house and servants' quarters. The family cemetery (Greenfield) and the servants' cemetery were located not far from the main house.

Museum files include a sketch of the plantation's layout that was drawn from memory by a 20th-century family member after the buildings were gone.

Upon Nannie's death in 1889, the plantation gradually deteriorated and was finally sold outside the family. Under the new ownership, the buildings were demolished.

The last to be buried in Greenfield was Horace Row (a great-grandson of Richard Estes), whose headstone reveals a Depression-era death date of Oct. 19, 1939. According to his obituary, Row was a farmer and one of nine contributors of land to the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park for the purpose of preserving the Jackson Trail. The trail, of course, played a significant role during the Battle of Chancellorsville.

After being neglected for all these years, the future of Greenfield Cemetery looks bright. NTS, the developing company of Fawn

'They [Yankees] came, searching the meat house, took all we had, including the flour . . . they broke open the house and searched it from top to bottom at least fifty times, broke open every door except the parlor, took every grain of corn and left us without one dust of flour . . .'

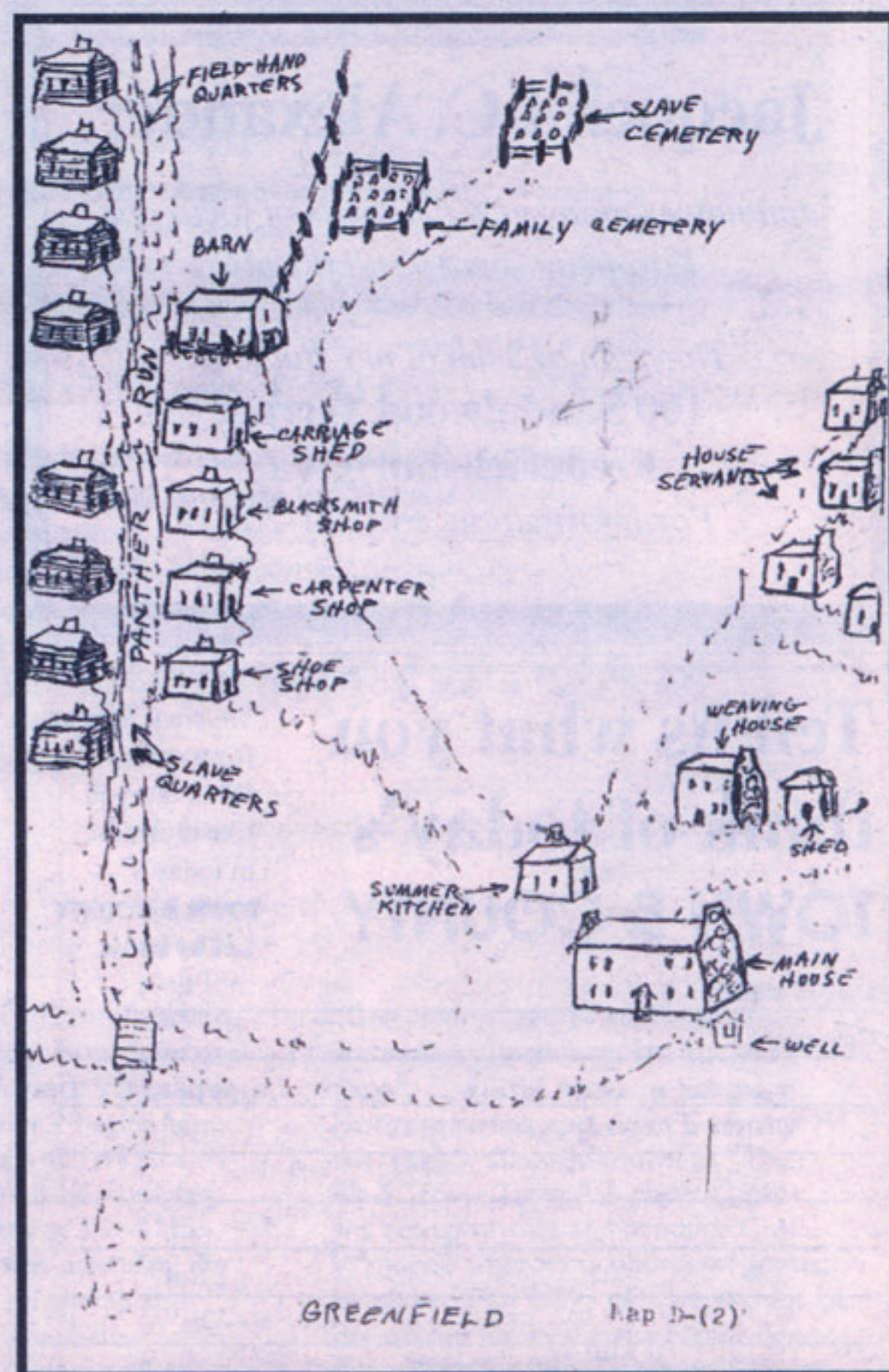
Maria Dobyns
Greenfield neighbor

Lake's residential community and present owner of the cemetery land, is now in the process of tidying up and improving the area. The company is planning to install a fence around the grave site's perimeter and install a plaque outlining the history of the cemetery.

In addition, an attempt is being made to locate the servants' cemetery. When found, it likewise will be honored.

These efforts ensure the Greenfield Plantation and Cemetery will never again be neglected or forgotten.

DON BOWERS is a retired engineer living in the Fawn Lake area of Spotsylvania County.



This sketch of Greenfield Plantation, penned by a 20th-century family member, shows the main house and many outbuildings of the once-thriving plantation. Only the family cemetery survives.