The Postwar Years

In 1872, the Lacys resumed life at Ellwood, having sold Chatham to help pay off debts incurred before and during the war. Over the next hundred years, Ellwood would be sold only once, to law professor Hugh Evander Willis in 1907. The Park Service acquired the house and grounds in 1977. Under its management, life at Ellwood goes on much as it always has: quietly, modestly, subject to the unending seasonal rhythm of till, plant, tend, and reap.

The Cemetery

Three hundred yards south of the house stands the Jones family cemetery. During the Civil War, several soldiers were buried here, including Colonel Joseph Moesch of the 83rd New York Volunteers and Engineer Keith Boswell of the Confederate army. Their remains were transferred to other cemeteries after the war.

Ellwood's most famous interment is "Stonewall" Jackson's left arm. On May 2, 1863, Jackson was wounded by the mistaken fire of his own troops at Chancellorsville. Surgeons removed the injured limb at nearby Wilderness Tavern. The following day, Jackson's chaplain, Beverley Tucker Lacy, carried the amputated arm across the fields and buried it in his brother's graveyard. It remains here to this day, the only marked grave in the cemetery.

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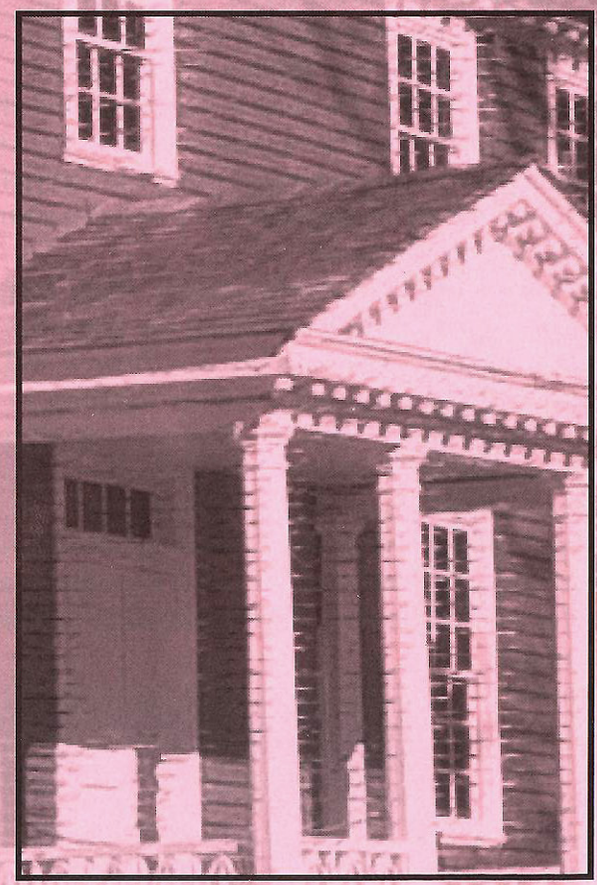


Ellwood

A Quiet Country Farm

Unlike the grander Chatham, Ellwood was no symbol of wealth. Instead it was a typical, prosperous, antebellum agricultural operation of middling size—designed for function, not show. Perched on a knoll overlooking Wilderness Run, Ellwood stood at the center of an extensive 5,000-acre estate. Around the house spread a cloud of outbuildings: stables, barns, slave cabins, a kitchen. A few dozen slaves worked the surrounding fields. The annual bounty—mostly grains and corn—was shipped along the Turnpike and Plank Road to markets in Fredericksburg, fifteen miles to the east.

William Jones built Ellwood circa 1790, and he or his descendants would own the place for the next century. The seasonal rhythms of till, plant, tend, and reap, and the daily rhythms of rise, cook, work, socialize, and cook some more, continued unbroken before the Civil War.

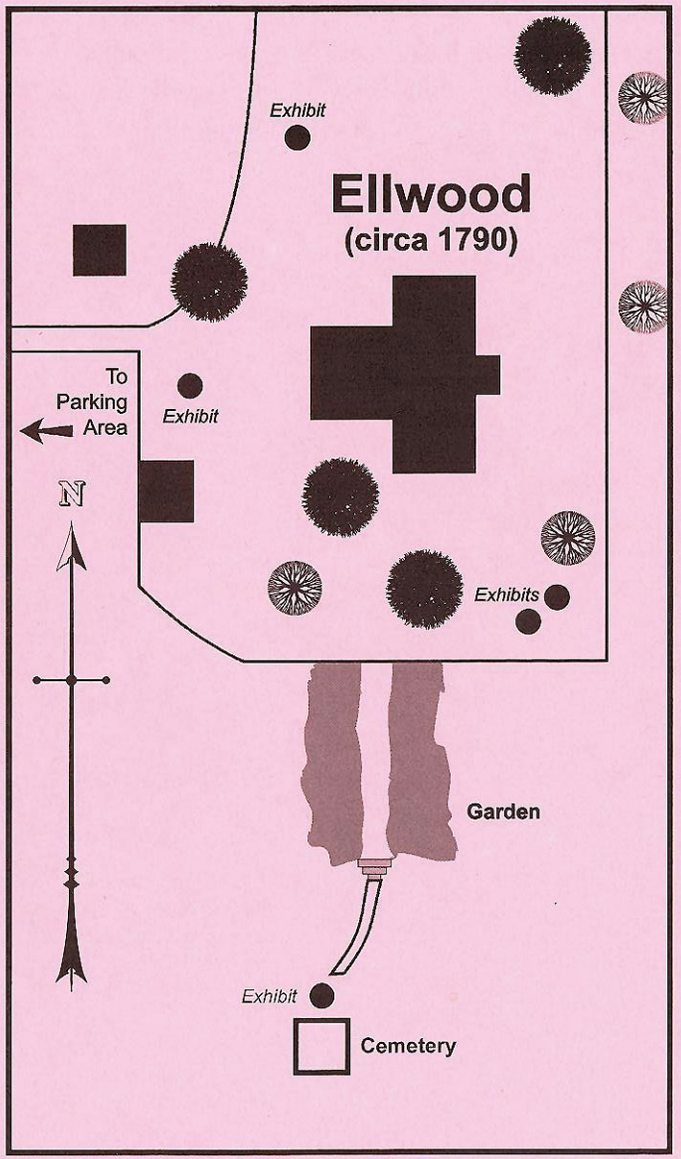
Legend holds that "Light Horse Harry" Lee, Robert E. Lee's father, wrote his memoirs in one of the upstairs bedrooms. In 1825, Revolutionary War hero Marquis de Lafayette dined at Ellwood during his triumphant tour of America. Other founding fathers, such as James Madison or James Monroe, may have stopped here, too.

The Civil War

Ellwood's fabric reflects decades of routine use. Its fame arises from its use during the Civil War. Wartime owners Betty Churchill Jones (William's daughter) and her husband, J. Horace Lacy, used Ellwood as a summer home, preferring the more palatial Chatham (now park headquarters) as their primary residence. Lacy was an ardent secessionist who served as an officer in the Confederate army.

Until May 1864, Ellwood stood on the fringe of events. A minor skirmish erupted here in April 1863, as the Confederates tried vainly to delay Union forces advancing toward Chancellorsville. Days later, General "Stonewall" Jackson's chaplain, Beverley Tucker Lacy (J. Horace's brother) chose the family cemetery at Ellwood as the final resting place for his chief's amputated arm.

For months after the Battle of Chancellorsville, the house served as a field hospital. Robert E. Lee camped here on his way to Gettysburg. In the fall of 1863, Union troops on their way to the standoff at Mine Run, seven miles west, stopped at Ellwood and ransacked the fine Lacy library.

For three days in May 1864, during the Battle of the Wilderness, the eyes of the world focused on Ellwood and its surrounding fields and thickets. The grounds teemed with Union artillery and soldiers as they prepared for, or recovered from, intense fighting a mile to the west. General Ulysses S. Grant—recently appointed commander of all Union armies throughout the country—made his headquarters just a few hundred yards north of Ellwood. Generals Gouverneur K. Warren and Ambrose E. Burnside, two of the Union army's four corps commanders, moved into Ellwood itself. Orderlies and staff officers swarmed around the buildings, carrying orders to front-line troops.

By battle's end, Ellwood's floors were stained with blood, its gardens trampled, its fences gone. Graves dotted the grounds. The house's caretakers had been arrested and sent to Old Capitol Prison in Washington. For the next eight years Ellwood would stand vacant or be occupied by tenants.