

## Group seeks rare picture for Civil War anniversary

By Preston Knight -- [pknight@nvdaily.com](mailto:pknight@nvdaily.com)

WOODSTOCK -- A picture is worth a thousand words and is priceless to a local Civil War committee.

Shenandoah County's committee for the sesquicentennial of the Civil War met this week to continue planning for the anniversary event. It has focused on telling the local story of treating injured soldiers, highlighted by placing a Civil War trails marker at the Confederate States of America general hospital that sat at the current site of Holtzman Oil Corp. in Mt. Jackson and developing a "caring for the wounded" brochure.

"It's an area that had previously not received much attention," said Scott Harris, executive director of the New Market Battlefield State Historical Park.

A member of the committee, he was unable to attend this week's meeting. However, Harris said Friday that one of the panel's goals remains unmet -- finding a picture of Dr. Andrew Russell Meem, whose family the Meems Bottom Covered Bridge is named after.

Meem was the surgeon in charge at the Mt. Jackson hospital when it went into operation in September 1861, committee member Terry Heder said Friday. The hospital lasted at least until 1864. The panel would like to add the doctor's picture to one of its signs.

The trails sign and brochure represent the first major projects of the committee, which Heder calls "second to none" in the work it has done. A Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation employee, he is involved with a number of sesquicentennial committees.

Harris, too, sees the local group as a good role model for others of its kind. A member of the advisory council to the state sesquicentennial commission, he said the county is boosted by having the infrastructure in place, such as protected battlefields and museums, to spread the war's historical message.

Virginia as a whole can say the same thing, Harris said, and it's working to do even more. The county and the cities of Fredericksburg and Richmond are seeking a grant to establish a three-way marketing program to target international visitors for the sesquicentennial, he said.

"We're very well positioned [for 2011]," Harris said.

That's true even if other states are behind in planning, Heder said.

"We have so much to promote around here, it shouldn't hurt us," he said.

Harris has the statistics to prove it, too. Citing the Virginia Tourism Corporation, he said there were 35 million visitors to the state in 2007 for the 400th anniversary of the settling of Jamestown. Two percent of those visitors went to Jamestown, while 10 percent were Civil War visitors, he said.

"Without even trying, the Civil War already is one of the most significant niches in the travel market," Harris said.

Even though there is some time before the sesquicentennial, Heder notes that the nation is in the beginning stages of it now -- the Harpers Ferry raid anniversary has already passed and the coming year is the 250th of the presidential campaign that led to Abraham Lincoln's victory.

"This is a great time to look back at anniversary dates," he said. "It's a way to ... build attention to future years."