

## Department of Historic Resources

([www.dhr.virginia.gov](http://www.dhr.virginia.gov))

**For Immediate Release**

October 2, 2014

**Contact:**

Randy Jones

Department of Historic Resources

540.578-3031 (cell)

[Randy.Jones@dhr.virginia.gov](mailto:Randy.Jones@dhr.virginia.gov).

### STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKER

#### "FIELDS OF FIRE" TO BE DEDICATED

*—Fairfax County marker highlights Union military activity at the beginning of the Gettysburg Campaign during a heat wave in the region that resulted in "sunstroke casualties" and fires in fields and woods—*

*—The marker's text is reproduced below—*

RICHMOND – A state historical marker issued by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources for Fairfax County that highlights activities of the Union Army's XII Corps during the Civil War and a heat wave in the region that afflicted marching soldiers and made a tinderbox of county fields and woods will be dedicated this month.

The public ceremony to unveil the new "Fields of Fire" marker begins at 10 a.m., Saturday, October 11, and will be held at the marker's location, across from the Reston Zoo, located at 1228 Hunter Mill Road, Vienna.

The dedication will feature remarks by Steve Hull and Jim Lewis, both of the Hunter Mill Defense League, and Fairfax County Board of Supervisors member Cathy Hudgins. The 17<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry, formed in 1861, will present the colors during the ceremony.

The "Fields of Fire" marker recalls that during June 17, 1863, at the beginning of the Gettysburg Campaign, the Union XII Corps broke camp and "left Fairfax Court House at daybreak, ate breakfast at Hunter's Mill, and halted by 11 a.m. because of extreme heat, 99 degrees in the shade," in the marker's words. Two days previously, the marker notes, the XII Corps was "devastated by sunstroke casualties" during the "grueling 25-mile-long march north." The

marker concludes by quoting the words of Brig. Gen. Alpheus S. Williams, the First Division commander, who wrote on June 17<sup>th</sup> that “the dry old grass of the fields and woods got on fire, and filled the air with smoke and additional heat.”

The Hunter Mill Defense League sponsored the marker and covered the costs of its manufacture. The sign was approved as a state historical marker by DHR’s Board of Historic Resources this past June.

Virginia’s historical highway marker program, which began in 1927 with the installation of the first historical markers along U.S. Route 1, is considered the oldest such program in the nation. Currently there are more than 2,400 official state markers, most maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation, as well as by local partners in jurisdictions outside of VDOT’s authority.

**Text of the marker:**

**Fields of Fire**

On 17 June 1863, early in the Gettysburg Campaign, the Union XII Corps camped just north of here. The men left Fairfax Court House at daybreak, ate breakfast at Hunter’s Mill, and halted by 11 AM because of extreme heat, 99 degrees in the shade. Devastated by sunstroke casualties two days earlier during the grueling 25-mile-long march north, the corps continued to suffer. Brig. Gen. Alpheus S. Williams, the First Division commander, noted on the 17th that “the dry old grass of the fields and woods got on fire, and filled the air with smoke and additional heat.”

###