Preservation of the Birthplace

George D. Stubbs purchased the store lot from Isabella Taliaferro Jones in 1878. During a period of increased interest in national history and notable individuals, the Medical Society of Virginia purchased the site of Dr. Walter Reed's birth from Stubbs in 1926. In 1968, the deed was passed to the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA), and the local Joseph Bryan Branch acquired more furnishings to interpret the house as

a mid-19th-century dwelling. In 2004, the Gloucester Preservation Foundation (GPF) was formed to care for the site. The Fairfield Foundation worked with the GPF to help better understand and interpret the property. Since 2019, Fairfield has acquired neighboring parcels to preserve the historic landscape, and partnered with the GPF to maintain the property and manage educational outreach.

This brochure was made possible by a grant from Virginia Humanities. As the state humanities council, Virginia Humanities connects people and ideas to explore the human experience and inspire cultural engagement. Headquartered at the University of Virginia, the organization works to serve every corner of the Commonwealth. To learn more, visit VirginiaHumanities.org.

GPF and Fairfield Foundation

The Walter Reed Birthplace is sustained by donations and grants. Your contributions to the Gloucester Preservation Foundation for maintenance of the property and to The Fairfield Foundation for programs at the site ensure that future generations learn about this iconic treasure.

The Fairfield Foundation involves the public in hands-on archaeology, historic preservation and related educational outreach. Activities are conducted to educate people of all ages in the process of archaeological and historical research; to provide outreach to students and the public about historic landscapes; and to encourage discussion, research, collaboration, and preservation of historic resources, including buildings, archaeological sites, historic documents and oral history.

The Foundation's major projects include archaeological outreach at the Burwell plantation known as Fairfield/Carter's Creek, restoration and repurposing at Timberneck House at Machicomoco State Park, preservation of the Walter Reed Birthplace, and interpretation of the restored 1930s Edgehill Service Station, which serves as its headquarters — the Center for Archaeology, Preservation, and Education (CAPE).

To contribute to GPF for the continued preservation of the Birthplace, send a check to **GPF, P.O. Box 991, Gloucester, VA 23061**.
To support the Fairfield Foundation's outreach programming, donate via their web site at **fairfieldfoundation.org** or send mail to **Fairfield Foundation, P.O. Box 157, White Marsh, VA 23183**.
Both Foundations are 501(c)3 non-profit organizations and donations are fully tax deductible. For more information, email fairfield@fairfieldfoundation.org or call 804-815-4467 or 804-815-1066.

The Walter Reed Birthplace at Belroi

The Belroi Landscape

In the early years of the new nation, Tidewater Virginia's landscape changed dramatically. Large farms were cut up into smaller ones, wheat and corn replaced tobacco crops, and Americans relied more on products produced regionally. Stores at crossroads developed to satisfy new demands for goods manufactured in distant locations.

Francis Stubbs opened a store at the intersection of Hickory Fork Road and the road to Gloucester Courthouse around 1812. It is not known what this building looked like, but archaeologists have found artifacts related to a store. Farther back on the lot, a house (the Birthplace) exhibits the simple architectural style common to small dwellings throughout Virginia at the time. Timber analysis indicates it was built from trees cut between 1819 and the summer of 1821. The building was probably constructed later that fall. It is still unclear whether it was built at this site or moved to here, but it was likely related to the store.

The crossroads community grew when a tavern opened across from the store. In the year Dr. Walter Reed was born, 1851, the property was owned by Jefferson W. Stubbs. He sold it to William Roy Jones in 1852, who soon bought more property in the area. Jones and his wife built their home across the street from the store lot, and called it Bell Roy. In 1890, the post office at the intersection was named Belroi.

The Reed Family

In the early 1800s, the Methodist Episcopal Church became the largest religious denomination in the United States. This was largely due to the activity of circuit riders, itinerant preachers who tended to multiple churches in rural communities. Lemuel Sutton Reed (1819-1897) was one such man. In 1851, he was assigned to the Gloucester circuit.

> ***"I conceived the idea of building a parsonage for the circuit at once, . . . I found a place at Bell Roi . . . it was a neighborhood thickly settled . . . about midway the circuit, and a good school was there . . ."***
>
> ***Jefferson W. Stubbs***
> ***Recording Steward, Bellamy Church***

While the parsonage was being built, a small house was found for Reed's family, which included four children and his wife, who was expecting another child soon. On September 13, 1851, in this modest building, the Reeds welcomed their fifth child, Walter. In 1903 his sister, Laura Reed Blincoe, remembered, "Dr. William Waller was [mother's] physician. He was a near neighbor and a great friend of the family."

In 1852, the Reed family moved on to a new Methodist circuit. During the Civil War, the Reed family lived in the Piedmont countryside. Older brothers Tom and James fought for the Confederacy. After the war, Lemuel Reed was posted to Charlottesville so his sons could attend school there.

Dr. Walter Reed

Walter Reed began his studies at the University of Virginia when he was 15. Afterward, he continued his medical studies at Bellevue Hospital Medical College in New York City. Reed joined the Army in 1875. After almost 20 years of assignments in the western territories, interspersed with assignments back east, Reed was recalled to Washington D.C. to join the faculty of George Miller Sternberg's new Army Medical School. This was a watershed moment in Reed's career and he took full advantage of the opportunity. He became a trusted troubleshooter for Sternberg.

After the Spanish American War, Reed led an Army board that investigated typhoid fever, which had killed more soldiers than died in battle. The findings of this board alone would have made Reed famous, but before they were formally published, he was sent to Cuba to lead another Army board to investigate infectious diseases including yellow fever. Within a few months, with the input and assistance of many others, he designed and carried out a series of human experiments that proved mosquitoes were responsible for carrying and transferring the yellow fever virus to humans. Application of his findings quickly led to the control of yellow fever in Cuba by killing mosquitoes. The Cuban "cure" was later applied in Panama and throughout the tropics.

Reed died in Washington in 1902 at age 51 following surgery that discovered a ruptured appendix, an almost always fatal condition in the pre-antibiotic era. William Borden, his surgeon and friend, campaigned for several years for a new Army hospital in Washington to be named for Reed. He was ultimately successful with the opening of Walter Reed Army General Hospital in 1909. Renamed Walter Reed Army Medical Center in 1951 on the 100th anniversary of Reed's birth, the hospital closed in 2011. But its name transferred to the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

Disease and Society

Communicable diseases have been recorded since ancient times. Outbreaks of diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy, influenza, and smallpox occurred wherever people gathered in large groups, and were often spread during wars or through trade. The yellow fever virus and the species of mosquito that carried it from person to person, *Aedes aegypti*, were introduced from Africa to the Western hemisphere in the 1600s when water in slave ships carried infected mosquito larvae. Afterward, epidemics of yellow fever occurred frequently, especially in port cities.

In 1855, an outbreak occurred in Norfolk, only fifty miles from Gloucester. The city was a growing hub for oceangoing commerce. When a steamship stopped in Hampton Roads, enroute from the Caribbean to New York, it brought mosquito larvae in its water barrels. The disease spread rapidly, quarantine areas were established, and pest houses were filled with the sick and dying. Orphans wandered the streets.

Yellow fever and other communicable diseases made a marked impact on the world in which Walter Reed would later practice medicine. When it was discovered that diseases were caused by bacteria and viruses, and their spread sometimes involved carriers like mosquitoes and rats, solutions were soon found. Rapid developments followed the successful rabies vaccine in 1885. Antitoxins and vaccines against diphtheria, tetanus, cholera, plague, typhoid, tuberculosis, and more were developed. The mid-1900s saw the creation of vaccines for yellow fever, polio, measles, mumps, and rubella. These greatly reduced the impact of disease on society.