

## *An Aftermath of the Civil War*

### **Herndon Residents and the Southern Claims Commission**

By Chuck Mauro

One of the more interesting events that occurred as an aftermath of the Civil War was the creation of the Southern Claims Commission. Congress established the Commission in 1870 to allow citizens to make claims against the federal government for losses of personal property that resulted from Union Army actions during the war. Claimants had to prove that they owned the property taken and that the Union Army took it. They also had to prove they were loyal to the Union during the war. Thirteen states, including Virginia, set up local commissions to check the validity of such claims by taking depositions from the claimants and their neighbors.

Four residents in and around Herndon submitted claims:

Joseph Cockerille had lived near Frying Pan Church nearly all his life. He rented a field from George W. Coleman, who lived at the southern end of Herndon along Centreville Road, near what is now the Worldgate Shopping Center. Cockerille was arrested twice during the war by the Union troops. The first time he was kept prisoner in the Washington for three months; the second time he was held briefly in Vienna before being released. His claim was for \$1,455 for 20 sheep, 2 horses, and 24 turkeys. He was allowed \$250. (We do not know why Mr. Cockerille was arrested. However, soldiers on both sides were always suspicious of civilians they did not know; they feared they might be spies for the opposition.)

Wesley Hall lived a mile south of Herndon. In the fall of 1862, the 5th New York Regiment took his corn. Isaiah Bready, who later served as Herndon's first Mayor, testified on Hall's behalf, saying he "was a poor man... and was regarded as a man not altogether in his right mind. At times he would appear a little flighty." Hall was allowed \$199 against his claim of \$419.

Charles W. Kitchen, a wheelwright, fled Herndon in 1861 after being ordered to report to the Virginia Confederate militia before the First Battle of Bull Run. He spent most of the war in Washington. According to his sister, Kitty Kitchen, his property was located next to a mill at what is now the corner of Elden and Center Streets. In 1863, Union troops took the lumber and brick from his house and outbuildings and used the materials to build barracks in Dranesville. William Butler of Herndon testified that he saw the soldiers tear down the outhouses. Kitchen received \$147 against his claim of \$289.50. (Kitty Kitchen was the subject of our September 16 column.)

William Van Husen lived on a 350-acre farm north of Herndon. A detachment of the 6th Michigan Cavalry took his horse in June 1863. Although he had numerous supporting depositions, his claim of \$375 was disallowed.

Residents of Fairfax County made total of 196 claims—including the four from Herndon—for a total of \$1,031,081. A surprising 32% of the claimants received some degree of compensation, although it was only pennies on the dollar. The total amount awarded was \$68,079.