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Salvaged stone used in Antietam restoration

By ERIN JULIUS

erinj@herald-mail.com

SHARPSBURG — A 110-ton donation of cut stone from Maryland's Division of Correction is going to help restore old buildings at Antietam National Battlefield.

The stone was quarried locally in the early part of the 20th century.

Inmates hand-cut the stone and used it to build Maryland Correctional Institution-Hagerstown.

The stone was salvaged from old stone walls built on MCI land after the walls deteriorated, said Rick Winebrenner, the maintenance administrator at the state prison complex on Roxbury Road south of Hagerstown. It then sat in a ground silo for more than a decade, he said.

"We knew it needed to be used for something worthwhile," he said.

Now, the stone will be used in 14 projects at the battlefield, said park Superintendent John Howard.

"Historically speaking, we're standing basically in the middle of the beginning of the battle," Howard told a group of state lawmakers and media gathered Tuesday at Antietam.

The first project involves a barn on the Joseph Poffenberger farm.

A three-person restoration team was working on the barn in the background as officials took questions. The stone will be used to restore the barn's foundation, Howard said.

Because the stone is already cut, time, effort and material costs will be saved, Howard said. He estimated the donation saved about \$100,000, which will allow the park service to do other work.

"What better way to reuse and recycle a natural product than to preserve and protect history?" Howard said.

The stone will be used to restore the foundations of other barns, outbuildings and houses. Any remaining stone will be used to build walls, Howard said.

Five barns are in need of foundation work. He expects work on the Poffenberger Farm barn to be done in eight or nine months.

The Poffenberger farmhouse is going to be reroofed and painted this summer.

Gary Maynard, secretary of the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, expressed interest Tuesday in having inmates assist in the roofing project.

"We're trying to provide inmate labor to communities and to other agencies to preserve history, to make life better for people in Maryland," Maynard said.

The restoration crew at work on the barn could use inmates to help move materials, Maynard said. Working on such projects also gives inmates an opportunity to do something meaningful, he said.

Brien J. Poffenberger, president of the Hagerstown-Washington County Chamber of Commerce, said the farm belonged to his great-great-great-grand-uncle. He heard stories passed down from his grandfather that his ancestors tied burlap sacks around their horses' hooves and hid them in the farmhouse basement during the battle so troops would not take them.

But at Tuesday's event, he was representing the Chamber.

"We can benefit a community from government and business transactions like this," he said.