

## ETC.

» SATURDAY DEDICATION TO MARK SLAVE CROSSING SITES ON RAPPAHANNOCK

# REMEMBERING A RIVER GATEWAY TO FREEDOM

BY CLINT SCHEMMER  
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

"Do any of you want to come over?"

That's what the Union pickets shouted across the Rappahannock River to John M. Washington on April 18, 1862.

"Yes, I want to come over," Washington yelled back.

And with those few words, the 24-year-old Fredericksburg slave and two companions hopped into the soldiers' boat and crossed from Fredericksburg to Falmouth. For Washington—and thousands who followed him—it was a voyage to freedom and self-emancipation.

This Saturday in Falmouth, a Virginia historian and a U.S. congressman will pay tribute to that event by dedicating two new wayside exhibits.

One marker will be in the Historic Port of Falmouth Waterfront Park, the other in Fredericksburg's Old Mill Park on the opposite bank. They'll describe how 10,000 slaves from central Virginia liberated themselves, crossing the river to reach Union lines in Stafford County that spring and summer, beginning the very day that the Northern army arrived.

Thanks to the vivid memoir that Washington wrote, his life is now the subject of two books, "A Slave No More" by Yale University historian David Blight and "John Washington's Civil War" by Virginia Tech historian Crandall Shifflett.

"This is a big story, and it moves our local story to a national landscape," said Sara Poore, chairman of the regional group that is coordinating the initiative.

"John Washington is one



PETER CIHELKA / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

**John Washington of Fredericksburg escaped slavery by crossing the Rappahannock to Union lines in 1862.**

of the few faces we know, one of the very few written accounts we have from slaves. Otherwise, we don't have those names and stories. He represents a large group of people whose stories have not been told or were often overlooked."

James K. Bryant II, author of "The Chancellorsville Campaign: The Nation's High Water Mark," will deliver Saturday's keynote address. Rep. Rob Wittman, R-1st District, will also speak.

They'll launch the Trail to Freedom, a multi-pronged project to help people learn about this relatively little-known mass migration. Before long, the trail will offer a walking tour in Fredericksburg and a driving tour in Stafford, a Web presence, trailtofreedom.com, and a virtual map.

The website will tie in social networks, provide a place for people to tell their stories and track down relatives through exchanges, and link to genealogical research and online resources.

"We invite other localities, including Spotsylvania, Car-

## WANT TO GO?

**What:** Trail to Freedom. Dedication of this new heritage route will tell how 10,000 slaves crossed the Rappahannock to freedom in 1862, well before the Emancipation Proclamation was issued.

**When:** 10 a.m. Saturday

**Where:** Historic Port of Falmouth park, 401 River Road, Stafford

**Info:** E-mail Sara Poore at spoore@famcc.org.

oline and King George counties, to join us in the effort to present this story," Poore said.

Phase 1 of "The Crossing" received the first grant awarded by the state sesquicentennial commission, and more funds from Stafford County, Fredericksburg and the National Park Service.

### ON THE NET

- bit.ly/jwvoice
- bit.ly/jwshifflett
- n.pr/jwNPR

Clint Schemmer: 540/368-5029  
cschemmer@freelancestar.com

## Clearwater Grill & Catering

# Father's Day

Brunch Buffet

Sunday June 20th 9am to 3pm

Adults \$15.95, Children 5-12 \$7.95

4 & under are Free

Regular menu available 3pm

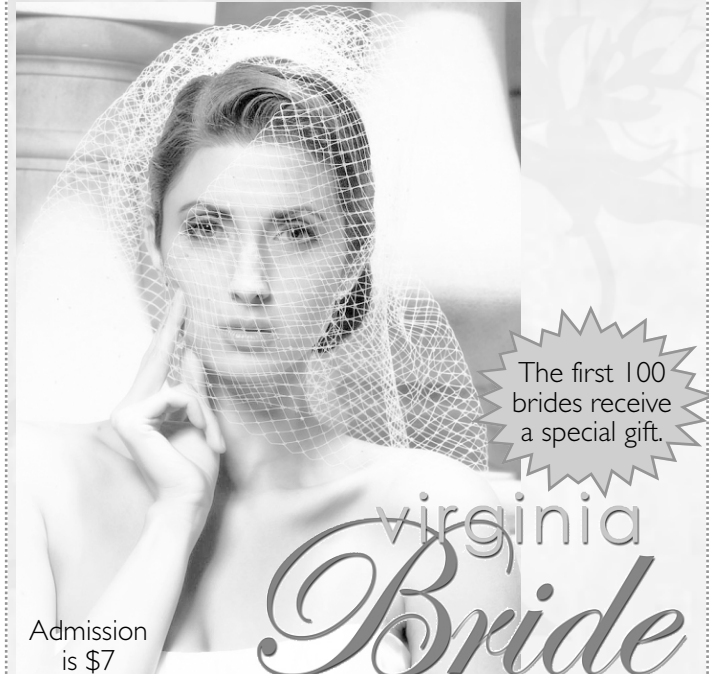
Large Party Reservations of 6 or more appreciated Call now & reserve a table

540.972.0606

Full Father's Day Menu online @

[www.clearwatergrill.com](http://www.clearwatergrill.com)

540.972.0606 - 540.972.(8646)



The first 100 brides receive a special gift.

virginia  
*Bride*

Admission is \$7

Don't miss the 8th annual

*Greater Virginia Bridal Show*

Sunday, June 20, 2010 • 1-4 p.m.

The Hospitality House and Conference Center Hotel  
Central Park, Fredericksburg

Imagine finding all of your wedding services in one day under one roof. From photographers to venues; the area's finest and most trusted wedding professionals are waiting to help you create the wedding of your dreams

- Win thousands of dollars in door prizes
- The Grand prize is an all-inclusive beachfront resort Honeymoon

Sponsored by

Virginia Bride Magazine and  
The Hospitality House and Conference Center

For more information visit

[VaBrideMagazine.com](http://VaBrideMagazine.com)