Tracest of sites sought
Group hopes to mark Confederate graves

By JAMES MINTON
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Today, nearly 135 years after the war ended, Clinton citizens visiting what is now called the Clinton Confederate Cemetery would find it impossible to locate or count the graves.

Many graves of local residents are marked with elaborate tombstones and monuments, but over the years, the soldiers' head boards rotted or vanished without being replaced. Not too long ago, portions of the cemetery were overgrown with weeds and shrubs.

Once maintained as a state commemorative area, the cemetery is now managed by a local board and maintained with a $1,000 annual state appropriation and donations, board Chairman Dewey DeLee said.

"We've come a long way in restoring it," said board member H.L. Forrester, who said the cemetery is the final resting place of five Confederate hospital records and determined the names of 49 soldiers from Tennessee, Arkansas and Mississippi who served at Port Hudson and are buried in the cemetery.

Although the exact locations of their graves are unknown, DeLee said the committee hopes to obtain government-issue headstones with the soldiers' names on them.

"They were traveling salesmen and got a boost last week when Bob Melia of Kenner used a laptop computer to analyze thermal imagery, scanned the area with an infrared video camera that he linked to a laptop computer," he said. "I really admire people who try to preserve their heritage. Looking at the line of flags and knowing what they represent makes you feel pretty good about it," Melia said of his assistance to the committee.

DeLee said the group's goal is to one day mark the graves with permanent headstones.

Meanwhile, the committee has researched the Confederate hospital records and determined the names of 49 soldiers from Tennessee, Arkansas and Mississippi who served at Port Hudson and are buried in the cemetery.

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"I really admire people who try to preserve their heritage," a "real good job," he said. "They were traveling salesmen. That's why we're here," he said.