

ON THE **skirmish line**  
Newsletter of The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

## PRESERVING THE LANDSCAPE

*From the President: 2009, the Year in Review*



The year 2009 has every appearance of having been dominated by Walmart's desire to build a supercenter near the Wilderness battlefield. The CVBT has been busy as well, however, and concluded the year by closing on a 93 acre tract of significant terrain in the Wilderness, for which we had bought an option in July. There was much more going on in battlefield preservation this year than Walmart's effort to develop near a twentieth century intersection.

In January, we had the good fortune to have Jerry Brent step in as our new Executive Director. He has been a member of the Board of Directors since 2001, but had recently retired and was able to take on the Executive Director's duties. Our previous ED, Linda Wandres, returned to the Board after several busy years of her own in that position. Jerry has taken on the exceptionally heavy workload, which appears to be the lot of all executive directors, with the result is that our organization continues to maintain contact with our members and do the good work that they so generously support.

In March, Virginia Governor Tim Kaine held a press conference at the Slaughter Pen Farm (Fredericksburg battlefield) to announce the Commonwealth's Civil War Historic Sites Preservation Fund. Also present that day was Delegate Bill Howell, who had been instrumental in getting the necessary legislation through the Virginia Assembly and has been a leader in getting the Virginia Sesquicentennial program up and running. Jim Lighthizer spoke for the Civil War Preservation Trust and emphasized the powerful partnership that exists between battlefield preservation groups and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

In April, the CVBT held its annual meeting on the Chancellorsville battlefield. Participants walked a portion of the Stonewall Jackson flank march, from the Lee/Jackson bivouac site to the Brock Road. They were led by Park Service historian Eric Mink, who has conducted numerous tours at CVBT events over the years. Another stalwart Park Service historian, Frank O'Reilly, led a tour of McLaws' Wedge the next day. Frank has also led numerous tours at CVBT events. Both gentlemen are well known to our members and very popular battlefield guides.

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## Spotsylvania and Orange County Governments Support CVBT

**W**hen the CVBT acquires battlefield property, we still receive a property tax bill from the local jurisdiction and must pay up, like any other property owner. There is no automatic exemption just because we are a non-profit organization. Local governments, however, can choose to exempt organizations like ours from having to pay those taxes, upon request. In this rapidly developing area, property values are jumping and the related taxes can be substantial. We are not averse to taxes, since they are the price of a civil community, but we also want to try to ensure that as much of our member donations as possible are used to acquire hal- lowed ground. To this end, the CVBT approached both Orange and Spotsylvania Counties, with positive results.

We first petitioned the Orange County Board of Super- visors, to ask that the taxes on our Grant's Knoll prop- erties be exempted. This Board was immediately receptive and instructed its staff to initiate the necessary process so that CVBT would not need to incur even the necessary filing fees. Over the next several months, the commercial zoning on these CVBT properties was formally removed

and an agricultural zoning applied. This action alone would have considerably reduced our taxes, but the Board then took the final step to formally exempt our organiza- tion from paying even those reduced taxes.

In Spotsylvania County, we had several properties on multiple battlefields for which we requested tax exemp- tion. Again, very quietly, but quite systematically, this jurisdiction moved our case through the formal process necessary for them to get to a point where they could take formal action not to collect specific property taxes from our organization.

The CVBT extends its thanks to the elected officials of both Orange and Spotsylvania Counties for their support of the CVBT mission. In these difficult times, decisions to forego tax revenue are not taken lightly, yet both boards recognized that battlefield preservation has tangible eco- nomic benefits of its own. We had also made clear that CVBT has an overall plan for preserving properties related to the battlefields. Rather than suggesting, as an organiza- tion, that anything and everything associated with the Civil War must be left undeveloped, we have maintained a focus on specific properties, which reassured both county boards that we knew what we were doing. Again, we thank them for their positive decisions. *sl*

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Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

## Central Virginia Battlefields Trust Now on FaceBook

**In our continuous effort to expand the public's awareness of Central Virginia Battlefields Trust we have taken yet another step. You may now find us on the web's popular FaceBook. By taking advantage of the millions of people who use this application daily we will be more accessible than ever. So tell your friends to check us out, become a "fan" and spread the word.**



**ON THE SKIRMISH LINE** is published for the CVBT membership at P.O. Box 3417, Fredericksburg, VA 22402. Contact CVBT at 540-374-0900 or [www.cvbt.org](http://www.cvbt.org). The CVBT is chartered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible. A financial statement is available, upon request, from the Virginia Office of Consumer Affairs.

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Dinner and the CVBT annual meeting took place on a knoll that overlooks Wilderness Church. Although the meeting site was inside the National Park, participants were within site of three completed CVBT acquisitions that have helped to preserve the integrity of the Jackson flank attack sector of the Chancellorsville battlefield. Also within view were several potential future purchases. Members could readily see how various parcels of land were coming together to ensure a cohesive battlefield experience. At that meeting we recognized founding board member Anne W. Rowe, who had recently passed away, and presented her family with a small token of our deep appreciation for the part she took in establishing our organization. We also presented our Ralph Happel Award to Bill Howell, for his years of

Wilderness Run, and includes 31 acres that are within the National Park boundary and thus authorized for acquisition by the federal government. The CVBT is calling this historic gateway to the battlefield Wilderness Crossroads.

Since acquiring the option for Wilderness Crossroads, we worked diligently to raise funds in order to match potential grants. The Commonwealth of Virginia committed a portion of its Civil War Historic Sites Preservation Fund for this ground, but required that the funds be expended during calendar year 2009. In response, we moved quickly to close on the property in December and recorded the deed before the end of the year. We still need to pay off a note before this property is free and clear, but we look forward to working with our membership to make

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outstanding and concerted preservation leadership within the Virginia Assembly.

Walmart was never far away, though. Since 2008, this retail giant had been going through the necessary steps to gain approval for construction of a supercenter at the intersection of State Routes 3 and 20, which is the modern route to the Wilderness portion of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Battlefield Park. A coalition of preservation groups organized to oppose this development, mustering media attention and urging more careful planning. The Orange County supervisors have given Walmart the OK to build, but the legalities of the decision are still being reviewed.

In August, the local board of supervisors voted to approve the Walmart development within their jurisdiction. The CVBT had anticipated this action and moved ahead to preserve important land nearby. In July, we acquired an option on a 93 acre tract that is the actual historic gateway to the Wilderness battlefield. As we have noted previously, the State Routes 3 and 20 intersection, where the Walmart is proposed to be built, was constructed in the early twentieth century, bypassing the historic intersection used by the Civil War armies. The CVBT property preserves the historic crossroads, is adjacent to the Wilderness Tavern site, east of

this property a permanent part of the preserved landscape, no matter what Walmart does.

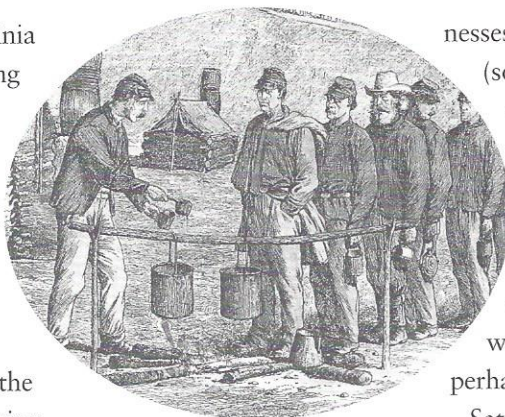
Even as we took on the historic Wilderness Crossroads, a major media project was coming together. Working in partnership with the Fredericksburg Civil War Round Table, the CVBT's own Tom Van Winkle had been helping develop a DVD called *Civil War Fredericksburg Then & Now*. This professional quality effort had taken on a life of its own and grown to encompass a battle overview, period photos compared with their modern setting (sometimes the change has been negligible), the experience of soldiers described by their descendants on the very ground where the historic events had occurred, and a section on battlefield preservation. The CVBT and the Fredericksburg Civil War Round Table held a premiere event on October 28th and sales took off. All proceeds go toward the purchase of dirt and grass and we could not be more pleased with this partnership.

As we barrel into 2010, we will endeavor to acquire additional grants to apply toward the Wilderness Crossroads property and work to pay off our obligation to the CWPT for the Slaughter Pen Farm. Both of these acquisitions will change the Civil War landscape in this area forever and our members should be proud of the part they have played, but there is more to do and we will keep moving on. *sl*



# PLAN AHEAD FOR THE 2010 Central Virginia Battlefields Trust Annual Dinner!

It's no secret that the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust has been evolving in the past few years. We have been implementing new and exciting ways to raise funds for our cause of preserving important battlefield land. Our revamped web site that is constantly updated to bring our news to the world and our first DVD presenting a fly over view and story of the Slaughter Pen Farm was just the beginning.



We have recently partnered with a local Round Table and created a new DVD, *Civil War: Fredericksburg Then & Now*, which has taken the Civil War community by storm and is helping raise substantial funds for us. Our annual journal, *Fredericksburg History and Biography*, is always gaining in popularity and the story content is amazing.

The recent partnership with Amazon.com has been fruitful as members, and others alike, shop from our web site allowing Amazon to send to CVBT from 4% to 15% of the purchase amounts to help fill our coffers.

So, we thought, why stop there? We have decided to inject some change and more energy into our annual meeting as well.

On April 24 and 25th, 2010, Central Virginia Battlefields Trust will present our 15th annual meeting in Fredericksburg. We usually hold our meetings on battlefield terrain and this next meeting will be no different. What will be different is that there is a new Marriott Courtyard in the historic downtown and they have reserved a block of rooms for CVBT guests at a rate of \$119 per night. This rate will be available on both Friday and Saturday nights (April 23rd and 24th). Relax after tours! Freshen up before our new dinner program!

Fredericksburg is the Civil War's only urban battlefield and we will have two walking tours, led by National Park Service (NPS) historians John Hennessy and Greg Mertz, describing this action on Saturday.

The Saturday morning tour will focus on the street action on December 11th, 1862. The afternoon tour will address the town's role as a hospital in the aftermath of the area's four major battles. In addition to examining the neighborhoods that witnessed intense street fighting, tour guides will discuss what happened to the houses and busi-

nesses that endured the close urban combat (some destroyed; many remain) and what it was like for the local civilians to live and work in such conditions.

Lunch on Saturday will be on your own which will provide you with the opportunity to take advantage of Old Town Fredericksburg's wonderful eating establishments and perhaps do a little exploring on your own.

Saturday evening at the Marriott will

begin with a cash bar cocktail hour followed by an exquisite buffet dinner and the annual meeting. NPS historian, Eric Mink, will provide a program featuring period photographic images of Fredericksburg. There will be a silent auction to raise funds for battlefield preservation and the Museum of The Confederacy has graciously agreed to display several articles from their world renowned collection!

On Sunday, we will tour CVBT's latest acquisition, the 93 acre parcel known as Wilderness Crossroads. This property is in close proximity to the site where Walmart is proposing to build a superstore. This truly historic ground comprises the historic gateway to the Wilderness. Eric Mink will be our tour guide and CVBT will provide a continental breakfast at the site.

The costs of the events are as follows; you may sign up for the event and get information on booking your hotel rooms via our web site. [www.cvbt.org](http://www.cvbt.org)  
Event costs do not include hotel.

#### Entire Weekend Package:

\$150 single/\$250 couple

#### Saturday events only (includes dinner):

\$115 single/\$195 couple

#### Saturday Dinner meeting only:

\$40 per person, \$25 for children under 15

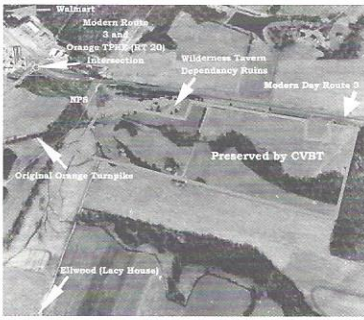
#### Sunday only (includes continental breakfast):

\$50 per person

We will be providing a detailed itinerary as we get closer to the event. So keep informed by visiting our web site.

In preparation for our Fredericksburg meeting don't forget our new DVD, *Civil War: Fredericksburg Then & Now*. This will be a great primer to your visit! Meet the Producers, Director, Writers and on screen talent at the meeting! **sl**





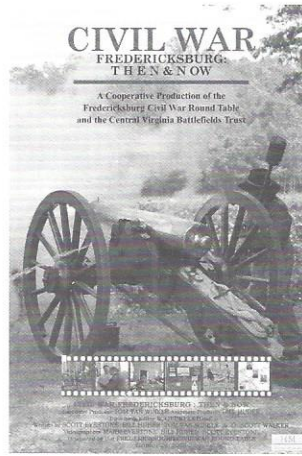
## CVBT Closes on the Wilderness Crossroads Property

In December of 2009, the CVBT closed on the 93 acre tract we are calling Wilderness Crossroads.

We had planned to delay closing until July of 2010, but a significant grant from the Commonwealth of Virginia became available, which had to be expended by the end of 2009. Consequently, the transfer of ownership has taken place and the deed recorded. We still have a sizable note to pay, but it is now considerably less than the initial amount.

The overall cost of the 93 acre tract was \$930,000. The Commonwealth of Virginia provided \$316,667 from its Civil War Historic Sites Preservation Fund and we have also received a pledge of \$95,000 from the Civil War Preservation Trust. The remaining balance is \$518,333.

The state grant requires a matching amount, which means that members who donate to the acquisition of the Wilderness Crossroads can do so with the knowledge that each dollar they contribute results in another dollar going toward the property as well. We have brought as many financial components together as possible to pay off our obligation and will continue to pursue others. Our intent is to close out this project as quickly as possible and keep moving on. Time is short and there is much to do. *sl*



## Story of Fredericksburg Takes on a Life of its Own

The new DVD, *Civil War: Fredericksburg Then & Now*, which was created by a partnership between the Central

Virginia Battlefields Trust and the Civil War Round Table of Fredericksburg, has become a phenomenal success!

Since its release on October 28th 2009, the DVD has sold over 1,000 copies and earned the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust almost \$15,000.00 to aid in battlefield preservation. That is a pretty substantial set of figures for a mere sixty days.

The creators have been seen on Comcast television in a half hour show devoted to the projects as well as two CNN spots.

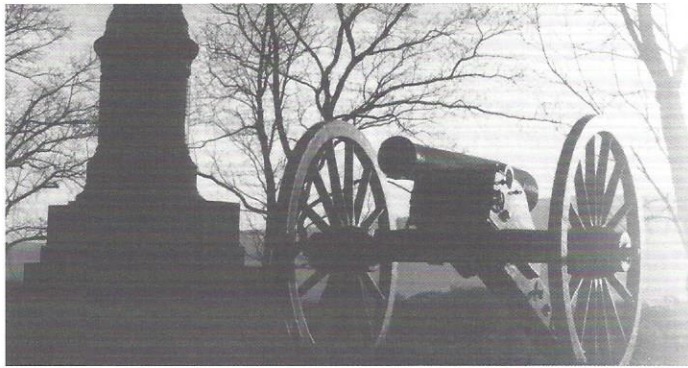
The DVD is available on line at the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust web site as well as at over eleven retail outlets in Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania and Maryland.

The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust would like to thank all who have purchased and supported this terrific project and we are looking forward to continued success as the Sesquicentennial approaches. If you haven't seen this two hour video you need to purchase it! Remember, all proceeds are going to Civil War battlefield preservation. No one is getting paid for their work on this project, it is volunteers and donations that made it possible. *sl*

## Stay on the Skirmish Line!



Take a look at the mailing label on your latest Skirmish Line newsletter. You will note your personal Central Virginia Battlefields Trust membership expiration date. To help us save on mailing costs and time, please be sure you are up to date on your membership. While we would love to offer the newsletter to everyone who has supported us in the past, economics dictate that we can only afford to send it to our current members. So please, please renew your subscription at the appropriate time to ensure that you will continue to receive your newsletter. You might also consider upgrading your membership level to increase our ability to save the hallowed ground we all seek to preserve.



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 The Trust's mission is to purchase Civil War battlefield terrain and to advocate for battlefield protection at the local, state, and federal levels of government.

For information on membership, please write to the Trust at P.O. Box 3417, Fredericksburg, VA 22402; call our office at (540) 374-0900; or visit our website at [www.cvbt.org](http://www.cvbt.org).

Contributions to the CVBT are tax-deductible.

**Membership Categories**

Annual Member	\$ 35	Patron	\$ 500	Life Patron	\$10,000
Active Member	\$ 135	Benefactor	\$ 1,000	Corporate Member	\$ 500
Sustaining Member	\$ 250	Life Member	\$ 5,000	Corporate Patron	\$ 1,000



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