



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

## From the President: *Respect, and Love, and Regrets*

**T**he CVBT's 20th anniversary will be celebrated at our annual meeting in April, and all of us associated with the organization can be humbly proud of what we have accomplished: Well over 1,000 acres of battlefield land preserved; a solid reputation in the community and the country for honesty and integrity; the acknowledgement of being "the best regional preservation outfit out there." Most importantly, we have continued to prove ourselves worthy of those brave men in blue and gray whose blood and bravery sanctified the ground we strive so hard to save. Simply put, we do what we do for them: To keep their memories and meaning alive; to remember and to honor who they were and what they mean to all of us who love this country; to respect their sacrifice and their suffering.

We have been successful because we recognize that these battlefields are special and spirit-filled, and that their destruction is a sacrilege of the first order. We have been successful because of the ongoing and steady support of you, our faithful and loyal members. We have been successful because of the exceptionally hard-working and dedicated men and women who have served on our Board, both past and present.

It has been my honor and my privilege to have been a part of that Board since CVBT came into existence in

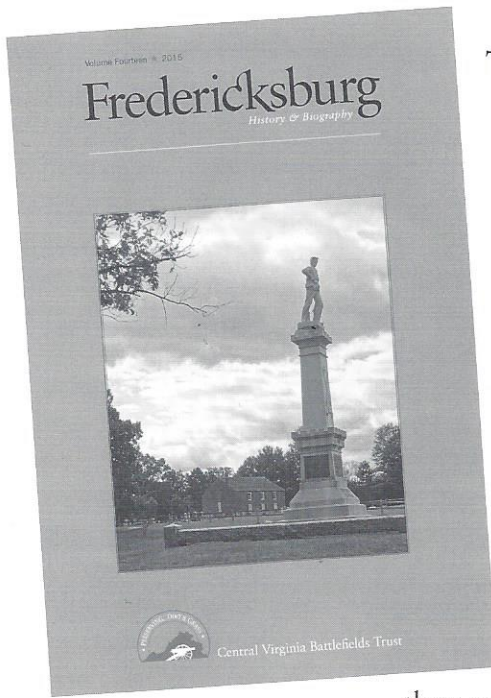
1996, holding the president's position for the past several years. The CVBT, its members, and my fellow Board members are family and I have come to respect and to love those associations deeply.

But time moves on and circumstances change. It is with sadness and regret that I must tell you that I will be resigning from both the Board and the Presidency in April. Personal issues require me to simplify and regroup, to step away from as many responsibilities as I can. Active participation in CVBT's leadership is one of those actions.

I will remain an active member of the organization, helping where and when I can, and who can know what the future holds? Our new President will be Tom Van Winkle, who is presently our Director of Communications and Webmaster. Tom is extraordinarily well-qualified to take over the presidential reins and our organization will be in very good hands with him in the president's role.

My plan is to call the annual meeting to order on April 30, to provide a brief greeting and a short moment of personal reflection. I will then provide the slate of nominees for the 2016-2017 Board of Directors and then, once that is completed, turn the gavel over to Tom and let him run things from that point on. See everyone in April....

—Mike Stevens



## THE CVBT PRESENTS ITS 2015 JOURNAL

THE 2015 VOLUME OF *FREDERICKSBURG HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY* will soon be available. We send copies to all Active Members and above, as a benefit of membership, but they are also available at bookstores and by direct mail. Over the years, we have published primary source documents, provided carefully researched papers on the battles fought in and around Fredericksburg, delved into activities on the battlefields after the war, and presented photographs that provide insight into these battles and battlefields of central Virginia.

This latest volume manages to hit all of those categories. We first look at the Jackson flank attack area of the Chancellorsville battlefield, through the letters of three men from the Union Eleventh Corps. The Trust has been assembling parcels of land in that area since 1998 and these letters relate directly to some of that terrain, since transferred to the National Park. Also included in this new volume are the meeting minutes of the Fredericksburg town council. We have been publishing those minutes in two year segments, taking our readers through the Civil War in the last few volumes. This new volume covers the years 1866-67, which shows how the elected officials experienced the beginning of reconstruction, starting with minor things such as oaths of loyalty, but then through the imposition of a military type of reconstruction as the politics in Washington D.C. became more confrontational. We also include a look at why the second battle of Fredericksburg gets little attention today and then finish up with a neat bit of research in our Southern Exposure section. **SL**

### E-Newsletters available

The CVBT is always looking for ways to keep expenses low and to maximize "dollars to dirt." The postage for mailing the newsletter is not an overwhelming expense, but it is not negligible either. In addition, we find that many folks prefer to receive electronic newsletters and we think it is time we offered that option to CVBT members as well. The benefits of electronic distribution, for instance, include a full color presentation and active links to sub-

jects in the articles and to all of our social media sites. You will also be able to readily forward newsletters to those you know who might be interested in CVBT news. If you would like to change your current "snail mail" to electronic distribution please contact us at [comdir@cvbt.org](mailto:comdir@cvbt.org) and state, "I would like to change my newsletter to electronic distribution." Once you are set up on the electronic distribution list (make sure your email address is valid) your paper copy will be discontinued.



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### The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, Inc. Board of Directors

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# TRUST ACQUIRES MORE LAND AT PELHAM'S CORNER

**T**his past November, the Silver Company, of Fredericksburg, donated 3.5 acres of land to the CVBT at the crossroads known as Pelham's Corner.

That location has associations with the December 13, 1862 battle of Fredericksburg and the Trust had begun to acquire some of the relevant acreage there shortly after organizing. At that time, however, the owner was reserving the corner itself for commercial development and the price was considerably more than our new organization could afford. Undeterred, we picked up two very small lots nearby (totaling no more than about half an acre), in 1999, and waited. In time, a developer thought the two CVBT lots would be useful for access to a

commercial enterprise and in 2007 the CVBT traded them for a full acre of land that preserved the actual scene of Major John Pelham's brave actions during the battle of Fredericksburg.

That important ground was also where the Reverend James Power Smith, formerly of Stonewall Jackson's staff, had placed a granite marker in 1903 commemorating the actions of Pelham and his commander J.E.B. Stuart. Several state highway markers had been placed there and additional wayside panels have been erected there since. The latest feature on that site is the CVBT's replica artillery piece that makes clear this ground is important and well cared for. Now, through this generous

{ Trust Acquires More Land at Pelham's Corner, continued on page 5 }



Bronze Guns and Iron Men, by celebrated artist Don Troiani



Although the day was wet and muddy, students cheerfully planted trees and shrubs and spread mulch.



## Fredericksburg Area Students Participate in a Wet and Muddy Work Day



The artillery reenactors gave one of the student volunteers the honor of yanking the lanyard that fired their piece.

**O**n a chilly, rain soaked November Saturday, 42 students from Fredericksburg area schools volunteered to help clean up and landscape the CVBT's newly acquired property at Pelham's Corner. This new acreage, which includes over 200 feet of road frontage, needed considerable work and these young students jumped in to pick up debris in ditches, in woods, and on the open area that is presented to visitors. They also planted trees and spread mulch. The students who cheerfully endured these miserable conditions to really make a difference were from Spotsylvania High School, Riverbend High School, Mountain View High

School, Post Oak Middle School, Chancellor Middle School, Thornburg Middle School, Rodney Thompson Middle School, as well as a group of home schooled students. The Riverbend students were from Rho Kappa National Social Studies Honor Society and the Mountain View students were part of the Learn and Serve program. To show its appreciation for all of their hard work during a wet and muddy morning, the CVBT provided lunch (pizza of course), CVBT Youth Day t-shirts, and arranged for an artillery demonstration at the nearby Slaughter Pen Farm. John Douglass and his gun crew, representing Stribling's Battery, of Longstreet's Corps,

explained how a Civil War battery functioned and provided a live firing demonstration. One lucky student, voted the hardest worker (clearly demonstrated by the accumulation of mud on his person) was instructed in how to fire the cannon and pulled the lanyard that ignited the charge. The CVBT's education director, Eric Powell, recruited the student participants and the result of their work is immediately evident on the expanded acreage the Trust now has assumed responsibility for at Pelham's Corner. The CVBT takes great pride in thanking these young volunteers who so ably represented the best of their schools and of their community. SL

gift from the Silver Company, the accumulated acreage at what we call Pelham's Corner has reached slightly more than 4.5 acres, which significantly increases its visibility for those who explore the Fredericksburg battlefield.

Pelham's actions on the morning of December 13, 1862 were dramatic and bold and took full advantage of the peculiar terrain that characterizes the south end of the Fredericksburg battleground. That area is part of the Virginia Tidewater and relatively flat. There are ditches and folds in the earth that provided cover, but overall the land is open and easily raked by artillery. The Federal engineers constructing pontoon bridges on December 11<sup>th</sup>, for instance, found themselves well covered by friendly artillery posted along the ridge that parallels the Rappahannock River. Unlike the protection that Mississippi troops found in the houses and mills in Fredericksburg, the Confederate pickets at that lower crossing had little cover and could only provide a warning of the Federal crossing rather than delay it. They fired a few shots at the Union bridge builders, then fell back to better ground.

As Federal troops expanded their bridgehead and deployed for battle, their advance across the flat plain toward the Confederate position left them exposed in turn. The Union troops had to move away from their covering artillery and approach a low range of hills where Confederate artillery was posted. Union field artillery also crossed the Rappahannock River in support of the Federal advance, but the middle ground between the two opposing ridges, even with nearby artillery, was uncomfortably open.

The Federal army prepared to attack on December 13<sup>th</sup>. Under the cover of a morning fog, the Confederates moved up a single 12-pounder field gun from Hamilton's Crossing and quietly went into battery just south of the Bowling Green Road. They had put themselves on the flank of two Federal brigades and the Union troops deploying for battle did not know of their immediate danger. According to the wartime accounts, Pelham opened fire around 10 a.m. This opening shot of the battle of Fredericksburg came from the preserved ground held by the Trust and reverberated across more preserved ground at what

would become known as Slaughter Pen. A Pennsylvania soldier remembered: "A cannon boomed out on our left, at close range, seemingly on the Bowling Green road, a shot whizzed high in the air passing over our heads from left to right along the line."

The reaction in the Federal ranks was swift. The infantry lay down, to ensure they "might not interfere with any of the flying iron." The artillerymen, for their part, yanked their guns around to be able to fire in the direction of the Confederates, who were surprisingly close. One of the Southerners later wrote: "Immediately after our first fire, and while in the act of loading the second charge, we received the fire of their artillery, showing how ready their guns were for action." The gutsy Southerners were in a slight depression though, and some covering cedar trees and the lingering fog made it difficult for the Federal gunners to find their range. The heavy guns across the river joined in with a rapid fire to suppress the Confederate gun, but they too overshot their target.

The Federal gunners knew their business and adjusted their fire. Pelham's position became a hot one and he ceased fire after about 20 minutes. His gunners lay down near their piece while Confederate cavalry moved up to confront the Federal infantry that had begun to move around and toward the crossroads. There was little respite for the Southern gunners as the Federals found the range. One of the artillerymen had his head blown off before the crew began to fire their cannon again.

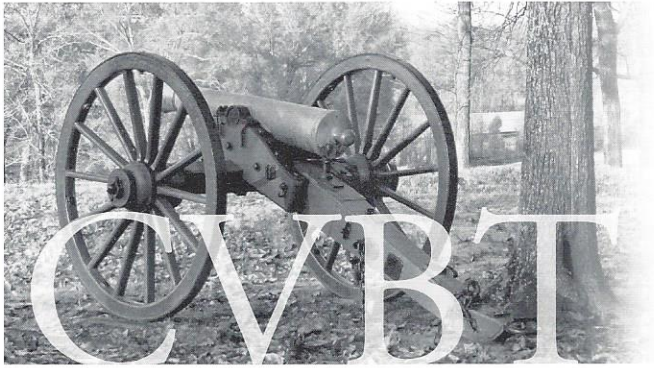
Pelham and his artillerymen delayed the Federal advance that morning, but the Union attack eventually went forward. That day's fighting is a story told at the Slaughter Pen Farm, where more than 200 acres have been preserved. Still, the opening shot was fired from the Trust property and that site has now grown to a respectable 4.5 acres.

In 2003, the Trust also acquired an 11.9 acre parcel between Pelham's Corner and Hamilton's Crossing. That site, which includes a trench and artillery positions, is 2,400 feet southwest from Pelham's Corner. The earthworks there were dug after the December battle and used during the second battle of Fredericksburg, but that is another story. SL

### Save the Date for Our Next Annual Meeting

The CVBT will celebrate 20 years of preservation activity at its annual meeting in 2016. This milestone event will take place in Fredericksburg from 29 April to 1 May, 2016. The feature of the annual meeting dinner on Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, will be an informal conversation between two giants of battlefield preservation, Ed Bearss and Robert Lee Hodge. Further details will be provided as plans are finalized, but save those dates.

April/May					2016	
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



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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.

Annual Member	\$ 35	Patron	\$ 500	Life Patron	\$ 10,000
Active Member	\$ 135	Benefactor	\$ 1,000	Corporate Member	\$ 500
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*Over 1060 Acres Saved*

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