

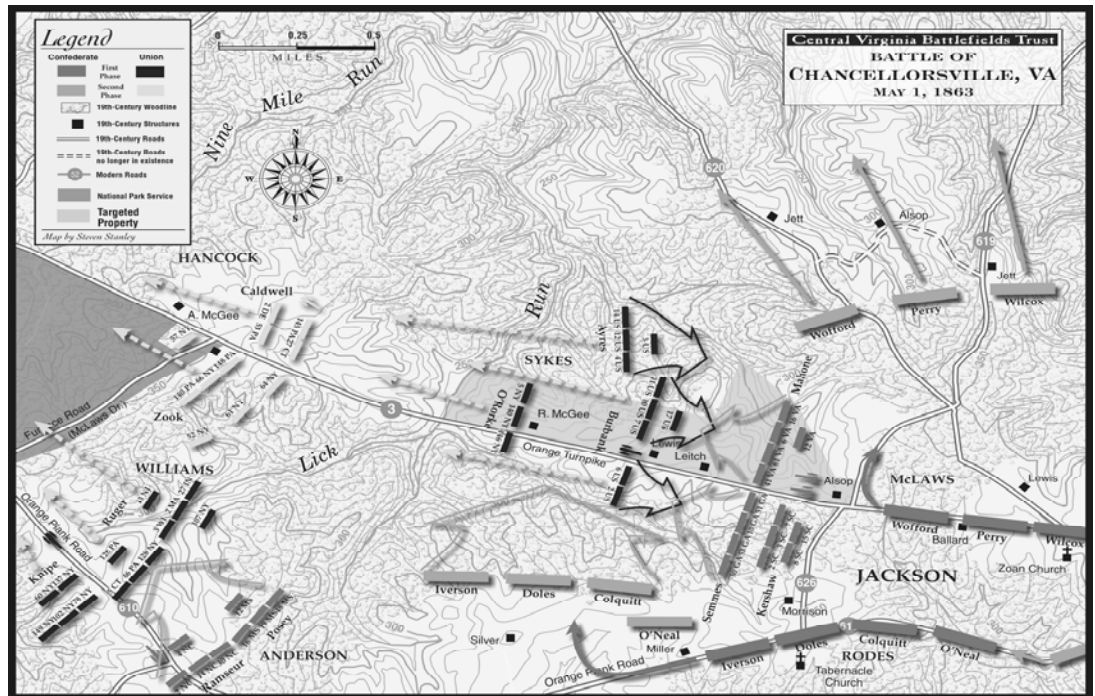
On The Skirmish Line

The Newsletter of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

Success at Chancellorsville

The Civil War Preservation Trust and a local development company named Tricord Homes have reached an agreement to preserve 140 acres of the May 1, 1863 battlefield. In the opening stages of the Chancellorsville Campaign, the Union Army of the Potomac stole a march on its adversary, the Army of Northern Virginia, when it swung far to the west and crossed both the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers. As Union columns moved toward Fredericksburg, Stonewall Jackson gathered what troops were available and pushed them west. The two sides collided on May 1st, 1863, on this land that has just been pulled out of the path of the bulldozers.

The CVBT has worked diligently for the past few years to protect this critical ground. During this time, things did not usually look very promising. The local government, for instance, rezoned 55 acres of this part of the battlefield



for commercial development. It also considered proposals to construct thousands of homes there. The residents of the county, however, decided such things in the eastern gateway to the Chancellorsville battlefield were not suitable. The voters mustered support and elected County Supervisors who were more attuned to Spotsylvania's historic resources and the rural landscape that still defines much of its character. The political change has benefited battlefield protection. The 140 acres that have been saved include the 55 acres that were just recently zoned for commercial development. This zoning is extremely lucrative to a property owner, which in this instance is Tricord Homes.

(continued on page 2)

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(continued from page 1)

This firm, however, is going to forego such development and include this tract in the acreage to be preserved. In addition, the acreage to be protected will extend 1,000 feet back from the highway. This developer is allowing the Civil War Preservation Trust to acquire the best acreage of the site. Tricord, however, will still be able to develop 87 acres of the overall tract. Their plans are to construct 294 homes, well away from the road and the preserved battlefield.

James Lighthizer and Jim Campi brought in the weight of the Civil War Preservation Trust to make this deal a reality. Over the past two years, the CVBT had identified the extent of the historic acreage that absolutely needed to be protected and worked with two different property owners to try to achieve that goal. In the end, though, this project was a joint effort between the nationally active CWPT and our local CVBT. Both organizations will be raising funds to pay the \$3 million price tag, which is absolutely a bargain (believe it or not) and both organizations deserve your support.

While this achievement is tremendously significant, the CVBT and CWPT will continue working to acquire another 150 acres between this just-preserved ground and the National Park property where McLaws Drive begins. This second step will complete the effort to protect the eastern gateway of the Chancellorsville battlefield. The CVBT had discussed this area with a previous owner, but that person sold the land to a developer. Discussions must begin with these new owners and we look forward to this next endeavor.

Fife and Drum Muster Raises Funds for CVBT

This past June, the Ellicott City B&O Railroad Station Museum (Maryland) held a fife and drum muster. Like most of their events, the weekend of June 19/20 was well attended and in this instance the Patapsco Patriots Fife and Drum Corps was on hand to help raise funds to preserve the Chancellorsville battlefield. The Patapsco Patriots are a group of musicians who specialize in martial music of the Civil War period. They forwarded \$1,218.86 to the CVBT, which we have put toward our purchase of an additional portion of the Talley Farm ridge. The music played during that June weekend has provided a very tangible benefit of lasting value. A special thanks to those dedicated and generous musicians.

Chancellorsville Land Benefits from Transportation Grant

As we announced this summer, the CVBT acquired 16.37 acres of land on the Chancellorsville battlefield this past March. Our members responded with a flurry of donations and we quickly raised over \$25,000 to help pay off the note. The Civil War Preservation Trust also stepped in and has worked to get the Virginia Department of Transportation to reallocate an unused enhancement grant and direct it to this property along State Route 3. On July 15th, the Commonwealth of Virginia authorized this transfer of funds, bringing the total raised for this land to more than \$175,000. We are getting very close to owning our this property free and clear.

This land, which is part of the Talley Farm ridge, is in the area where Jackson launched his flank attack on May 2, 1863. It is in the vicinity of three other parcels of land the CVBT has acquired over the years. One of these, a five-acre parcel on the north side of the Orange Turnpike, has since been transferred to the National Park Service and is now part of the Chancellorsville battlefield park. The other parcels, including this latest purchase, comprise another 45 acres of historic ground. Like the pieces of a puzzle, these individual parcels are becoming a cohesive whole that will help folks to better understand this pivotal battle.

We will keep members apprised as this acquisition nears completion.

Volunteers Dress Up CVBT Prop-

When the CVBT acquires property, it usually plans to transfer title to the National Park Service. Some properties will remain in CVBT ownership permanently, but most sites are purchased to be able to enhance the existing visitor experience. There is sometimes a lengthy period between purchase and ultimate disposition, though, so the Trust does what it can to properly maintain its properties.

A site on the Chancellorsville battlefield needed extensive restoration. The CVBT first removed a



Mike Chapman and Eric Mink construct part of the worm fence

fire damaged house and its entire foundation. Four brick driveway pillars were also demolished and the ground was re-graded and seeded to prevent further erosion. At this point, nature can take its course and the trees and vegetation will soon return. To put the finishing touches on this site, a group of volunteers erected a few sections of worm rail fencing. Gathering early on July 17, this group made short work of this task, but the visual impact is excellent and long lasting. Thanks guys.

Craig Rains, CVBT Board member Harriett Condon, Mike Chapman and Eric Mink with the completed fence



Fredericksburg's Sunken Road Becomes Part of the Battlefield



On August 16, the last privately owned motor vehicle drove down Sunken Road, through the position where Confederate infantry held back Union assaults during the wintry battle of Fredericksburg. That day, this once public right of way closed to through traffic and the National Park Service prepared to begin to restore this historic site to something more like its appearance in December 1862.

This major restoration became possible a few years ago, when the Fredericksburg City government agreed to relinquish its right of access to this road. The National Park owned the land, but the municipality still maintained Sunken Road as, ..well, a bypass. A new road, however, had altered traffic patterns and reduced the number of vehicles that still used Sunken Road. The City of Fredericksburg proceeded carefully, with appropriate public input, and eventually decided that this site's national importance needed to be respected. As former city mayor Bill Greenup once observed: "Those who live in special places have a special responsibility."

The overall restoration of this wartime scene will in-

corporate the 9.5-acre Willis Hill property that was the CVBT's first battlefield success back in 1997. The CVBT was a new organization then and benefited from a close partnership with the Civil War Preservation Trust, a relationship that is still very much alive. Over the years, these various components and decisions have come together to create the opportunity to develop a dramatic historic scene that visitors will be able to experience like never before.

Archaeologists have carefully pinpointed battlefield features such as battle trenches, stone wall foundations, gun pits, and early structures – many of which had been lost to view

since 1862. This information will be used to restore sections of the stone wall that are missing and to provide accurate interpretation. Finally, the asphalt road and the concrete curbs and gutters will be peeled up and hauled away and a surface put down that will not erode but will still look like a dirt road. Fredericksburg's roads are all paved today, but older folks remember a time before many local roads had been surfaced. After a heavy rain, they invariably found minie balls by the handful that had washed out of the soil. That so much lead could be recovered so readily, within living memory, is a startling reminder of the tremendously high volume of small arms fire that swept local neighborhoods in 1862.

Work has begun. Power lines are being buried, sections of the stone wall restored, and trails developed. In the Spring, after the heavy equipment currently in use is no longer needed, the asphalt will be removed and the new surface laid down. We encourage our members to visit this area for a whole new experience.

Harris Farm Battlefield

An area known as the Harris Farm saw action on May 19, 1864 and became the last of the many battles fought around Spotsylvania Court House. Today, only a representative portion of this battlefield remains intact and the CVBT has agreed to accept responsibility for this site where a monument to the First Massachusetts Heavy Artillery stands. There are no trenches in that area, but a line of mature trees marks the location of a wartime road. The size of the preserved area is 1.737 acres, but it lies within a fairly low density residential neighborhood. Consequently, the terrain remains somewhat open.

On May 18th, General Ulysses S. Grant shifted his forces in preparation for a march south, around the Confederate flank. His opponent, Robert E. Lee, directed Richard S. Ewell to determine the location and intent of the Union army. Ewell sent two divisions on a wide sweep behind what had once been the Union position and they were able to move without hindrance until they ran into Federal skirmishers, less than a mile from the Fredericksburg Road. The Union troops were untested heavy artillery units, retrained as infantry, and newly arrived on the field. The Confederates were experienced veterans of countless campaigns.

The Confederates constituted a reconnaissance in force, but they launched an attack around 4 p.m., to try to create havoc in the Union rear before more experienced troops could respond. The heavy artillerymen had formerly been garrison troops. They were aggressive and brave, though, and stood up to the Confederate onslaught for several hours, until daylight faded into darkness. The fighting extended across a long front that included the Harris, Alsop, and Peyton Farms, but Federal reinforcements were on their way and the Confederates eventually disengaged and withdrew.

The Southerners suffered 900 casualties, out of a force that could muster only 6,000 troops. Federal casualties amounted to 1,400 men. The disparity is due primarily to the inexperience of the Union troops, who had not yet learned how to take advantage of the terrain. The next day, Timothy O'Sullivan exposed a series of photographs of the Confederate dead, grim images that have become classics of their period and of great interest to historians.

There is much work to do on this acreage to make it suitable for interpretation and visitation. We will keep our members up to date as we move forward.



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