



ON THE skirmish line

Newsletter of The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

FROM THE PRESIDENT

A Look Back at CVBT's 20th Anniversary Year: A Time for Strengthening and Preserving

Throughout 2016, CVBT celebrated its 20th year in preserving endangered Civil War battlefields. We have protected over 1,060 acres of our history and every one of us associated with the CVBT should be proud of what we have accomplished. From the CVBT leadership to our members and supporters, we are a powerful team.

Veteran members Bill and Katherine Hoyt recently stated: "We believe that history is important. The terrain where major Civil War battles were fought is part of our American heritage. Preserving these battlefields enables future scholars, history buffs, and tacticians to better understand what took place and why. While we do not live in the Fredericksburg area, we are proud to assist financially to the extent we are able." Steadfast supporters Mark and Karen Perreault wrote: "CVBT preserves hallowed ground in perhaps the most challenging environment for doing so



In Fredericksburg, we are surrounded by historic features. This young fellow is on the old Banks Ford road.

in the nation. When historic Pelham's Corner faced commercial sprawl development, CVBT did not despair—it preserved what it could, interpreted it, and preserved more later. I am betting it will do even more on the site in the future."

While celebrating 20 years of accomplishments, the CVBT has also worked vigorously to strengthen our organization, while acquiring new endangered properties.

Lands Specialist Mike Greenfield, along with Chief Administrator Ben Brockenbrough, have tirelessly pursued multiple properties on three battlefields, with remarkable results.

In Fredericksburg, CVBT negotiated the preservation of an almost overlooked relic of combat. We acquired an artillery gunpit occupied by the Norfolk Artillery during the December 13, 1862 battle. We are also assisting the Civil War Trust in financing the preservation of a series of

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tracts near our Pelham's Corner property, on the southern edge of the battlefield.

We saw two major acquisitions at Chancellorsville in 2016. In April, we added the newly dubbed Stonewall Brigade II property, which adds to the previously acquired land along the south side of Plank Road that is associated with Stonewall Jackson's flank attack on May 2, 1863. We have an additional property in that sector under contract, with closing planned for January 2017 (after which the specifics will be announced). Also notable in 2016 was the Civil War Trust's major purchase of 355 acres known as the Chancellorsville-Wilderness Crossroads. The CVBT assisted in identifying the potential development trends in that area and also contributed monetarily to the purchase.

On the Wilderness battlefield, CVBT has begun an initiative to purchase vacant lots within the subdivision that is near the earthworks that line Hill-Ewell Drive, the principal tour route through the National Park. The strategy is to expand the buffer between this well-traveled park thoroughfare and the contemporary structures that intrude on its historic integrity. In April 2016 we purchased our first residential lot and have our eye on several others.

We continue to be good stewards of our properties as well as your contributions. We have evaluated our processes and added new technology to support CVBT's continued growth and success. Our new web site, for instance, includes an interactive map of CVBT preserved lands, a more complete newsletter archives, and a much more user-friendly process to complete CVBT on-line transactions. We have added a CVBT store that allows you to support our cause and display your proud membership by purchasing branded items. We continue our commitment to keep you informed via CVBT e-mails and the use of Facebook. The over-use of these applications in business

is frequent, so CVBT strives to send only what we think you want and need to know. We have also introduced the option of receiving our quarterly newsletter, The Skirmish Line, via e-mail, to allow viewing on mobile devices.

An upgrade of our lands database has also allowed us to be more proactive than ever in identifying endangered properties and acting quickly to save them. To replenish the monies invested in preserving the newly-acquired lands in 2016, the CVBT initiated a fund raising appeal with a goal of \$81,200 and we continue to look to realize that objective.

In summary, CVBT has been busy in 2016 and is poised to be even busier in 2017, with several preservation efforts currently in the works. We remain dedicated to working with property owners and our partners to obtain results favorable to all parties. Our success as an organization does not come from our size. We know we aren't the biggest. We are successful because of the partnership we have with you, our team members, who actively support the mission of guarding our history and insuring it does not become forgotten or erased. The CWT has publicly pronounced CVBT as, "the best regional Civil War land trust in the country." Your support is a key reason for this honor, so please accept a profound thank you!

E-Newsletters available

Some folks prefer to receive certain types of mail in electronic format and that option is available for CVBT newsletters. If you would like to change your current newsletter mailing to an electronic distribution, please contact us at comdir@cvbt.org and we will make that change for you.



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The Confederate Left Flank at Fredericksburg

“Fredericksburg—what a cloud of war hangs over this old town! The mere mention of the name awakens the veteran’s slumbering interests,... I have estimated that every soldier of the Army of the Potomac, as well as that of Lee’s Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, has at one time or other, been at Fredericksburg.”

The above quote is a post-war observation by a veteran who travelled through the South’s battlegrounds and wrote about it. There are several such late nineteenth century travel books, of varying quality, but this passage reflects on the length of Fredericksburg’s ordeal during the Civil War. Certainly places like Richmond, Charleston, and Chattanooga experienced protracted periods of siege and bombardment, as did Atlanta and Vicksburg, but Fredericksburg proved a stumbling block to the Federal advance on Richmond for more than two years and it has the scars to prove it.

The war—in terms of battles, skirmishes, encampments, hospitals, and burying grounds—touched everywhere in Fredericksburg, and there are more places of historic interest today than could ever have been set aside to be protected and cared for. Even the scenes of four main battlefields—Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Court House—are not fully preserved and much of our work at CVBT is to continue to add to them. In Fredericksburg and its immediate environs, the landscape is dotted with earthworks and battlefield

features that are well beyond the National Park boundaries.

As an example, the Confederate line at Fredericksburg extended roughly seven miles, from Hamilton’s Crossing to Fall Hill. The Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park (FSNMP)

includes roughly five miles of these defenses, from Hamilton’s Crossing to Willis Hill (where the Visitor Center and National Cemetery were established). When the FSNMP came into existence in the 1920s, a State College had been established on the hills

north of the National Cemetery, the campus extending as far as a new highway that had cut through the Confederate stronghold. The remaining two miles of the Confederate position were not acquired by the Federal government and the town’s growth has invariably encroached on historic terrain that was beyond the protected portion of the battlefield.

Beginning in the 1990s, the Fredericksburg City staff and the National Park staff worked closely together to identify historic features within the city limits, but outside the National Park that could potentially be protected. Since the early 1970s, the Park staff had been aggressively adding acreage to the area’s battlefields, but many places would always remain outside the limits of what the FSNMP could absorb. The Park staff would also assist the Spotsylvania County planners to know what parts of the area’s battlefields were outside the Park boundaries, so their eventual development could be done in a manner sensitive to historic features.

Within the Fredericksburg city limits, there were several gunpits in the wooded hills

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This map of the seven-mile line at Fredericksburg shows Fall Hill at its north end and Hamilton’s Crossing at the south end (from Battles and Leaders).

Third Annual Youth Community Service Day

NOVEMBER 5, 2016 WAS A BEAUTIFUL DAY for cleaning up two CVBT properties during our Third Annual Youth Community Service Day. Forty-three volunteers participated in helping clean battlefield land along the south side of the Orange Turnpike, on the Chancellorsville battlefield. Twenty-six students ranging in ages from 10 to 18, from public and home school programs, spent the day improving the properties. The largest group was the Rho Kappa History Honor Society of Riverbend High School in Spotsylvania, participating for the second year. The student volunteers were supported by a number of parents, CVBT members, and reenactors from the 47th Virginia Infantry, Co. I, who manned chainsaws and drove loads of debris to the dump. The 47th also gave a musket firing demonstration, following a presentation about the Battle of Chancellorsville and the work of the CVBT by its Education Director, Eric Powell.

Overall, ten loads of debris and trash were hauled off from the property that was once the site of military surplus store and a partially completed house. The CVBT removed those buildings, but the land was still



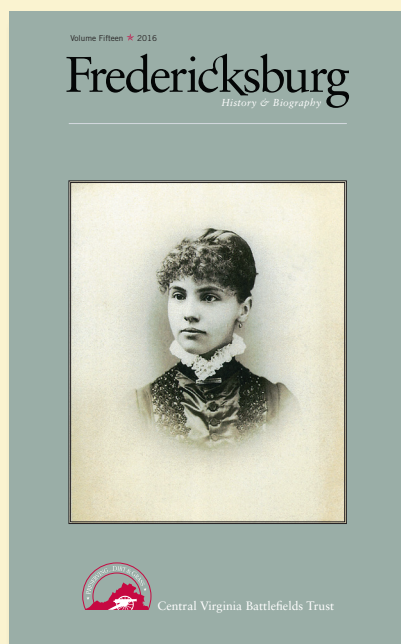
The work done by the volunteers ...saves us money that we can dedicate to "preserving dirt and grass". Most importantly, it teaches young people about the work of the CVBT and the importance of preserving battlefields.

littered with a large amount of trash. CVBT Lands Manager, Mike Greenfield, said: "I was very impressed how the students kept digging through the leaves at the old house site on the Castle property. They kept bringing out old metal items and tires that I didn't know about." Additionally, the students put two coats of sealer on the newly-installed fence along the road frontage and cleaned the garage that still stands nearby.

The work by the volunteers not only beautifies the properties, but helps make them safer and easier to bush hog. It also

saves us money that we can dedicate to "preserving dirt and grass". Most importantly, it teaches young people about the work of the CVBT and the importance of preserving battlefields. Keith O'Neil, a CVBT member from Virginia Beach who traveled to Fredericksburg for the event, stated: "To spend a few hours working with some of these young volunteers and

see their enthusiasm for CVBT's land preservation mission gives me hope that future generations will follow our lead and continue the effort to preserve this land near our battlefield parks."



CVBT's 2016 Journal is Now Available

THE 2016 VOLUME OF FREDERICKSBURG HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY IS NOW 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 story of a Union soldier whose grave in the Fredericksburg National Cemetery is still remembered by a local family with flowers every Memorial Day. We also present primary documents from an 1895 visit to the local battlefields and the Fredericksburg Town Council minutes for 1868-1869, as Radical Reconstruction took hold. Finally we present the story of a wartime murder in Fredericksburg. This is volume 15 in an ongoing annual series.

(The Confederate Left Flank at Fredericksburg continued from page 2)

west of town and much of that terrain had also been a battlefield on May 4, 1863. It had never been feasible to protect the entire nineteenth century landscape, but key components could potentially be kept intact to contribute to our understanding of the overall campaigns. The Confederate left flank was never going to be a place where visitors or scholars could tramp a battlefield, but they would be able to study the spatial relationship between different positions and thus better understand their use in battle. That strategy was certainly a compromise, but the alternative was to have nothing.

Tangible surviving sites include the following protected sites:



★ **Fall Hill**— This privately owned ante-bellum mansion sits on a 23-acre site protected by an easement held by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. The property includes several trenches and an ante-bellum road. Adjacent to this site is another 50 acres of the original Fall Hill property owned by the City of Fredericksburg, which is planned as a publicly accessible natural area and which will allow visitors to see the dramatic terrain on that part of the Fredericksburg battlefield.



Zig Zag Trenches



Double Lunette



★ **Zig Zag Trenches**— In the early 1990s, the developer of a medical office park deeded a wooded five-acre site to the City of Fredericksburg that included a unique set of earthworks with a distinctive zig-zag pattern. They were dug and occupied by a brigade of Alabama regiments, led by Brigadier General Cadmus Wilcox during both battles of Fredericksburg. The new trench configuration appears to have come out of their experience at Antietam, when they were under different leadership. During that September battle in Maryland, those troops had been horribly cut up by an enfilading fire in what became aptly known as Bloody Lane. Sustaining heavy casualties in a linear death-trap may well have caused them to establish trenches at Fredericksburg

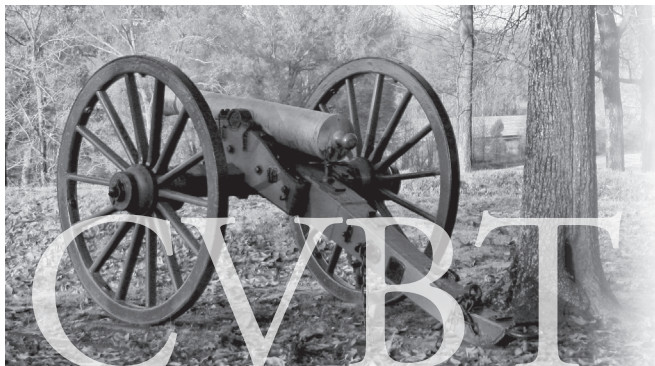
that had protective breaks to avoid such heavy losses again. A new road is being built in front of these works, between them and the Rappahannock Canal, but their foreslope has not been altered and the new road has cut off an informal trail that was used by bicyclists who were damaging the works as they travelled back and forth. The zigzag design did not last during the Civil War, but reemerged in Europe, during World War One. For the rest of the Civil War, the use of traverses along a trench line served the same purpose of protecting troops from an enfilade fire.

★ **Double lunette**— Near the Norfolk Artillery site, and similarly surrounded by development, is a double lunette surrounded by a metal fence. These works were

brought under permanent legal protection when the land was rezoned to allow for construction of the neighboring medical building.



★ **Norfolk Artillery site**— As reported in our last newsletter, this 4.7 acre site was just recently donated to the CVBT. It consists of a hilltop gun pit and supporting infantry trench. The area around it has been developed, but this site includes not only earthworks, but a ravine that shows the topography of that area of the field.



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The mission of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust is to preserve land associated with the four major campaigns of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Court House.

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. Contributions to the CVBT are tax-deductible.

Annual Member	\$ 35
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Sustaining Member	\$ 250

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