



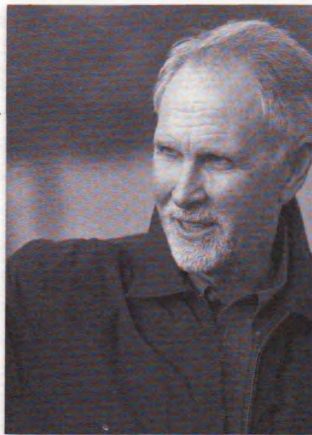
ON THE skirmish line

Newsletter of The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

CVBT's 2014 Annual Meeting Focuses on The Wilderness

The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust held its 2014 annual meeting on the evening of May 2, roughly coinciding with the 150th anniversary of the Battle of the Wilderness (May 5-6, 1864). Noted author and historian Gordon C. Rhea (right) joined us and served as our key-note speaker for the evening, providing his unique insight into the battle, having penned one of the most highly regarded and detailed histories of the fighting in that tangled forest west of Fredericksburg: *The Battle of the Wilderness: May 5-6, 1864*.

Photo courtesy of the Civil War Trust



While he was in the area, Gordon also led a two-day bus tour on "*The Wilderness Battle 1864*." This tour examined many sites and aspects of the battle, including the approaches to the Wilderness by both Union and Confederate forces, the principal May 5 sites and battle engagements, the fighting at the Widow Tapp farm, a walk along the unfinished railroad grade, and finally, the forces' movements and engagements as they proceeded from the Wilderness to Todd's Tavern and Laurel Hill, leading up to the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House. We hope that many of you had the opportunity to participate in this informative

tour, which was sponsored by the Friends of Wilderness Battlefield.

CVBT President Mike Stevens welcomed guests and presided over the Trust's traditional dinner on May 2. The CVBT Board and our guests once again enjoyed a delicious buffet dinner at the Fredericksburg Hospitality House Hotel. Mike began the business meeting with an overview of the Trust's recent activities and acquisitions. Our newest acquisitions include three additional parcels along Route 3. The 81 acre "Wilderness Crossroads II" tract consists of three non-

contiguous parcels to the north of the road, that include the sites of the historic Wilderness Tavern and the Confederate Second Corps hospital, where Stonewall Jackson's arm was amputated. The 13 acre "Rodes-Doles" parcel to the south of Route 3 was previously occupied by the brick "Castle" (a former relic shop) that we demolished last year. Finally, we purchased the 9.2 acre "Stonewall Brigade" tract, which was also a part of Jackson's flank attack. With the latter two acquisitions, CVBT has now preserved 58 acres on the south side of Route 3, and over 1,000 acres altogether.

Mike also spoke of one of our key events last year.

(Continued on page 2)



(Annual Meeting, Continued from page 1)

On December 13, we held a dedication ceremony for the replica 12 pound Napoleon cannon that we purchased and installed at the corner of Tidewater Trail and Benchmark Road—on a one acre tract we call “Pelham’s Corner.” CVBT preserved this property back in 2007. We scheduled our ceremony on the 151st anniversary—to the day—of the heroic action that Major John Pelham took at that site on December 13, 1862. Major Pelham’s daring use of two cannons delayed—for an hour—the Union assault against Confederate forces, over the land that is now known as the Slaughter Pen Farm. We want to thank NPS historian Frank O’Reilly for his moving address to the crowd on that day, and to all others who took part in that very special event. Finally, Mike and the CVBT Board again want to give special thanks to Executive Director Jerry Brent and Lands Management Director Mike Greenfield who brought this important project—and the ceremony—to fruition.

After Mike announced new and reaffirmed Board nominations, followed by elections, CVBT Treasurer

Lloyd Harrison provided a summary of the Trust’s strong financial status.

While CVBT traditionally hosts numerous tours and events as part of our annual meeting, we did not do so again this year, to enable our members to participate in the wide variety of tours and programs sponsored by the National Park Service, as well as Gordon’s bus tour. The NPS events, for both the Battle of The Wilderness and the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House, spanned more than two weeks, from May 3 through May 18. These are described in more detail in the following article: *A Nation Remembers*.

Thanks to all of you who attended our meeting and the NPS events at The Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House. The meeting provided an excellent opportunity for our Board members to spend time with our valued members and to share camaraderie, our mutual interest in history, and a commitment to preserve the battlefields in Central Virginia. We look forward to seeing everyone at our annual meeting next year, which will include CVBT sponsored tours as well as our dinner meeting. SL



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**. 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.

The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, Inc. Board of Directors

Michael P. Stevens
President

Harriett Condon
Vice President

Jerry Brent
Executive Director

Lloyd B. Harrison
Treasurer

Robert K. Krick
Secretary

J. Michael Greenfield
Lands Maintenance

Board Members:
Robert Lee Hodge
Kevin Leahy
Charles G. McDaniel
Jim Pates
Eric Powell
Josiah Rowe

Tom Van Winkle
*Communications
Director, Web Master*
Linda Wandres
Newsletter Editor

Contributing Author:
Linda Wandres

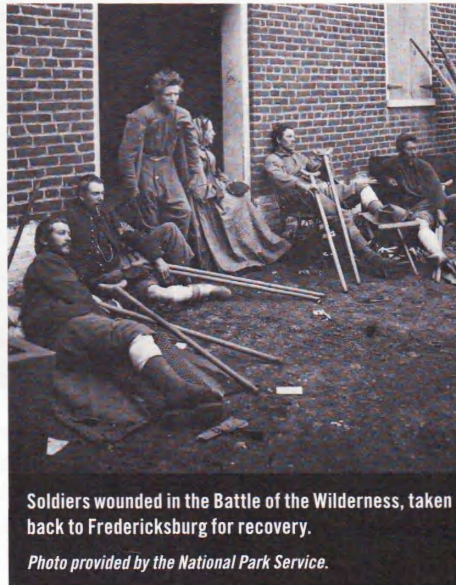
Photographs:
The Civil War Trust
Eric J. Mink
National Park Service
Tom Van Winkle

A Nation Remembers: Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House

From May 3 through May 18, residents and visitors were treated to an extraordinary series of programs and tours as the National Park Service commemorated the 150th anniversaries of the Battle of The Wilderness and the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House. These events were conceived and executed flawlessly by the dedicated and knowledgeable historians and staff of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, under the direction of Superintendent Lucy Lawliss.

The Commemoration began with an Opening Ceremony for the Sesquicentennial Observance of the 1864 Overland Campaign, held at the Spotsylvania Court House Battlefield on May 3. Noted Civil War Historian James I. Robertson, Jr. delivered a moving keynote address at the ceremony. Following Dr. Robertson's address, three separate programs were held at Historic Ellwood.

The NPS-sponsored activities at the Wilderness Battlefield from May 4-6 were varied and numerous. They included two bus tours and nine walking tours, two of which were real-time tours, faithful to the times and places where the events occurred in May 1864. The bus tours focused on the advancement of both armies toward the battle site, and the opening clash between Grant and Lee in the Wilderness. Most of the walking programs focused on specific engagements during the battle. These programs related to the firing of opening shots at Saunders Field, the invasion of the Higginson Farm, a walk in the "dark, close wood" of the Wilderness, the critical battle over the intersection of Plank Road and Brock Road, Robert E. Lee's "charge to the front" at the Widow Tapp farm, the flank attacks carried out by both Longstreet and Gordon, and the horrific battle between the two armies on the Plank Road. A campfire program was also held at Ellwood to mark the last peaceful night before shots were fired in May 1864.



Soldiers wounded in the Battle of the Wilderness, taken back to Fredericksburg for recovery.

Photo provided by the National Park Service.

The Park Service also sponsored many engaging programs to commemorate the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House. These programs, which were held from May 8 through May 18, included two bus tours and eleven walking tours (ten of which were held in real time), as well as several other on-site presentations, including programs on the death of John Sedgwick, Fredericksburg as a City of Hospitals, wartime mothers and soldier-sons (as well as wives and their soldier-husbands), and the rise of the United States Colored Troops and their first battle engagements serving in the Army of the Potomac.

The bus tours addressed the opening movements of the battle as the armies raced toward the crossroads at Spotsylvania Court House, and the fighting at and beyond the Bloody Angle. The walking tours from May 8-11 examined Federal and Confederate troops' clashes at Laurel Hill, the building of the Mule Shoe salient (and the transition from open field fighting to trench warfare), Emory Upton's famous "battering ram" attack on Confederate earthworks at the Mule Shoe, and a hiking tour focusing on some lesser-known areas of Spotsylvania. On the evening of May 10, the NPS also orchestrated a magical program of sound, music, words and remembrance as the Culminating Event to commemorate the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House. The Culminating Event commenced at the McCoull House at 7:30 p.m., and thereafter, visitors were led by historians in a procession to the Bloody Angle for the concluding program.

On May 12, the 150th Anniversary of the fight for the Bloody Angle, five real-time walking tours focused on the monumental events of that day, alternately following in the footsteps of Union and Confederate troops. The tours covered Winfield Hancock's initial Union onslaught, the calls

{Continued on page 7}

Honoring the Fallen at Harris Farm

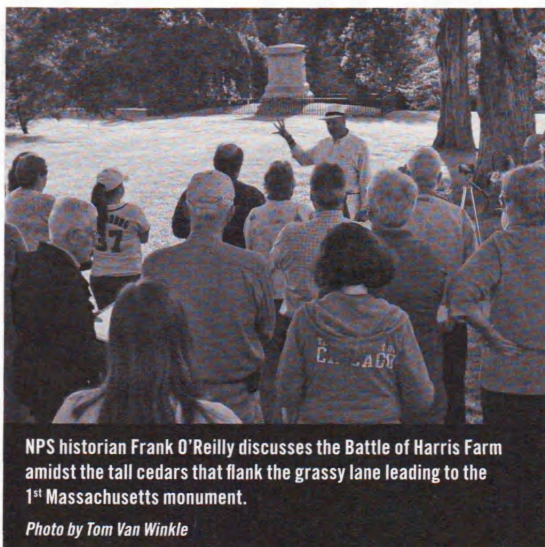
When travelling southwest from Fredericksburg on Route 208 (formerly known as the Fredericksburg Road), you may notice a Virginia Civil War Trails sign several miles northeast of the Spotsylvania Court House. An arrow on the sign points to the right, into Bloomsbury Farm Estates, a subdivision with large, well-kept homes on attractive lots. Situated within that land is the site of the Battle of Harris Farm, which was the last battle of Grant's 1864

Overland Campaign that was fought in the Rappahannock Valley. After this bloody clash on May 19, 1864, the opposing Union and Confederate forces regrouped and took their combat farther south, first to the North Anna River, then Cold Harbor, and ultimately to Petersburg.

On May 19, CVBT hosted a program in remembrance of the many men killed, lost or wounded in the intense fighting on this ground. The casualties from this one-day battle were roughly 1500 men for the Army of the Potomac, and 900 for the Army of Northern Virginia. The CVBT event was held at sunset on the 150th anniversary of the battle, and was attended by more than 50 people, including four descendants of Union soldiers, three of whom fought at Harris Farm. Another attending guest was Spotsylvania resident and longtime CVBT member John Grant Griffiths, who is the great grandson of General Ulysses S. Grant.

Historians Robert K. Krick and Frank O'Reilly provided the audience with a riveting account of the bloody fighting that occurred at Harris Farm 150 years ago, as well as a brief history of the site, and a recap of the efforts that have been taken to preserve a portion of this ground.

Both the Union troops and the Confederates were exhausted prior to the fighting at Harris Farm. On the previous day, Grant's forces had launched a massive assault against Confederate troops who were entrenched behind strongly built earthworks to the rear of the Mule Shoe salient—a position which has since been called "Lee's Last Line." The ongoing Federal assault was repelled, largely by Confederate cannon and the strength of their newly built



NPS historian Frank O'Reilly discusses the Battle of Harris Farm amidst the tall cedars that flank the grassy lane leading to the 1st Massachusetts monument.

Photo by Tom Van Winkle

works. The Army of the Potomac took heavy losses, and marched to new positions that night.

The opposing troops in the Battle of Harris Farm could have not have been more different. While Confederate General Richard S. Ewell was commanding units of experienced and battle-savvy veterans, Grant's forces consisted of many newly arrived troops—brought in from forts protecting Washington, D.C.—a number of whom had not seen combat before

May 19, 1864. Among others, three of these units—the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery, the 7th New York Heavy Artillery, and the 1st Massachusetts Heavy Artillery—were fighting as infantrymen.

On the morning of May 19, Union commanders realized that there was an undefended gap in their supply lifeline along Fredericksburg Road. This road was vital to maintaining Federal provisions in the field, as wagons travelled from the Potomac Creek harbor of Belle Plain to Spotsylvania County to restock the Army of the Potomac. As the Union worked to remedy this problem, Ewell sent out reconnaissance probes to pinpoint the Federal right flank. Once Federal troops had been located along Fredericksburg Road, Ewell led his corps on a march to the west of the Federal line—past the Couse house, across the Ni River, and finally back toward the road, near the Alsop and Harris farms. As the intense fighting began, the inexperience of many of the Union troops resulted in many casualties, and at times the Confederates seemed to take the upper hand. But the Federals held their ground, despite heavy losses. As darkness fell, the battle was virtually a stalemate, and later that night, Ewell withdrew his forces. Many consider the Battle of Harris Farm to be a Union victory—despite their heavy losses—since the Army of the Potomac ultimately repulsed Ewell's attack and the Union retained possession of the ground.

The history of the land and the monument at Harris Farm are both noteworthy. The name of the land and the

(Continued on page 5)

**{Harris Farm, continued
from page 4}**

battle are derived from the owner of the property in the mid-to-late 1800's—Clement Harris. On May 17, 1901, the existing granite monument was erected on the site and dedicated by relatives and survivors of the men from the 1st Massachusetts Heavy Artillery who fought and died on that ground. The land leading up to the monument (which is referred to in multiple deeds as a “gravel road easement”) is in fact a substantial grassy strip that now leads from a paved subdivision road up to the monument. This “Memorial Lane” is flanked on both sides by straight lines of tall and impressive cedar trees, which were planted by Union veterans to honor their predecessors.

In 1927, James McGee purchased the Harris Farm property, consisting of 400 acres, and began to operate a dairy farm on the land. In August 1965, as a widower, he transferred his interest in all 400 acres of the farm to Agnes V. McGee, reserving a life estate for himself. Ms. McGee maintained ownership of the entire acreage until September 1972, when she transferred 247 acres of the tract to Bloomsbury Investments, a local general partnership.

Throughout her life, Ms. McGee knew and cared a great deal about the history of the Civil War in Spotsylvania County. She was also determined to preserve at least a portion of the Harris Farm land, where so many men had perished. Thus, in October 1988, Ms. McGee conveyed 135.7 acres of her property to Thomas and Hilda Sagun “LESS AND EXCEPT two tracts or parcels, one of which being described as ‘1.50 acres in size surrounding the memorial located on Bloomsbury to the Massachusetts Volunteers who fought in the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse.’” Thereafter, on May 9, 1989,



Frank O'Reilly and CVBT Board Member Bob Krick shared both their knowledge of the Battle of Harris Farm and of ongoing efforts to preserve this piece of Civil War history.

Photo by Tom Van Winkle

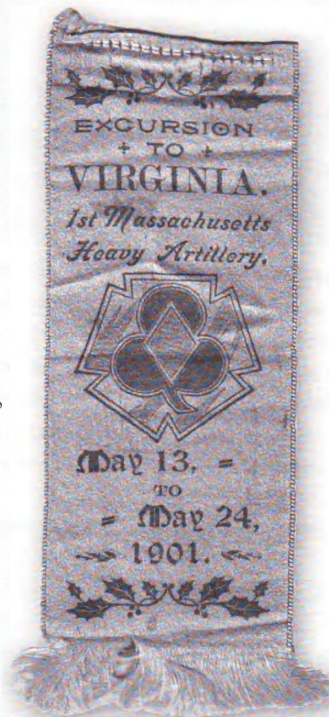
Ms. McGee signed a Deed of Gift and Easement with both The Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites (APCWS) and Thomas and Hilda Sagun. This Deed of Gift conveyed the 1.5 acres that had been previously excluded from the 1988 transaction with the Saguns to the APCWS. All three parties to this deed agreed on the location of the 1.5 acres that was to given to the APCWS. Furthermore, the May 1989 deed also granted the APCWS a right-of-way easement “over the existing

‘Gravel Driveway’” for ingress and egress to the 1.5 acre gifted site.

Thereafter, on January 27, 2003, the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT), as successor to the APCWS, executed a new Deed of Gift transferring its interest in the 1.5 acre monument site at Harris Farm to the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust. In a subsequent conveyance on December 16, 2004, the CWPT transferred to CVBT a Gift of Easement for the ingress and egress land appurtenant to the site of the 1st Massachusetts Memorial. This easement covered two parcels near the monument site, totaling 3.128 acres.

Since 2004, CVBT has continued to hold ownership of the 1.5 acres upon which the 1st Massachusetts monument is located, as well as the 3.128 acres of the related conservation easement. We physically maintain this property (grass cutting, painting, etc.) as part of our sacred trust to the men who fell and died on or near this spot on May 19, 1864. We are most grateful

for the valor of these men, and for the many sacrifices they made on this hallowed ground 150 years ago. We are glad that many of you may have had the opportunity to come to Harris Farm and see this special place. And as always, we are grateful to you, our members, for the support you show for CVBT and our ongoing preservation efforts. SL



Historic Braehead REVERENTLY RESTORED

This Op-Ed comment was published in the Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star on May 25, in response to a previous Letter to the Editor.

This is in reference to Emmett Snead's "On the Farm" article dated May 2 [Braehead, along Old Grain Road route]. Braehead is a magnificent 6,200 square foot Greek Revival home that is located within the boundaries of the Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park. The house, which was built for Scottish immigrant John Howison in 1859, is noted both for its distinctive design and its historic significance.

As the Battle of Fredericksburg began to unfold in 1862, General Robert E. Lee located his command post near Braehead on Telegraph Hill, now known as "Lee's Hill." Surveying the intense fighting from this spot, General Lee commented: "It is well that war is so terrible, or we would grow too fond of it." On the morning of December 13, 1862, General Lee is said to have taken breakfast at Braehead, tying his horse "Traveller" to a walnut tree on the lawn. The home was also caught in the midst of a clash between Union and Confederate forces in

Well aware of the historic significance of Braehead, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust (CVBT) signed a purchase contract with owner Dr. W. Graham Stephens in November 2006, after the home was listed for sale.

May 1863. The Federal Army would later occupy Braehead and use it as a hospital, causing much damage, and leaving behind graffiti, bayonet marks, and a blood stained floor.

Braehead was added to the National Register of Historic Places in May 2000. Well aware of the historic significance of Braehead, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust (CVBT) signed a purchase contract with owner Dr. W.

Graham Stephens in November 2006, after the home was listed for sale. CVBT's goal was to purchase this historic property, place the home and the surrounding 18.8 acres under a conservation easement, and re-sell the property to a buyer who would fully appreciate its historic value.

Over the next year, CVBT worked with Dr. Stephens and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) to craft an easement to protect the "Historic Preservation and Open Space Values of the Property." The easement, which permanently protects the land and the interior and

{Continued on page 7}

Stay on the Skirmish Line!

Take a look at the mailing label on your latest *Skirmish Line* newsletter. You will see that it includes your CVBT membership expiration date. Since we are a dirt and grass outfit, members can help us save on mailing costs by checking that expiration date and sending in their renewal on their own. If the date is highlighted, your membership has expired. While we would like to share the *Skirmish Line* with everyone, we can only afford to send it to current members. So please renew your membership at the appropriate time. You might also consider upgrading your membership level, to increase our capability to save hallowed ground in central Virginia.



Remember to order all your Amazon.com items through the CVBT Amazon web link. CVBT receives a percentage of the order to help preserve hallowed ground!



{Historic Braehead, continued from page 6}

exterior of the home from inappropriate development, was finalized in December 2007.

In April 2008, Robb and Dr. Diana Almy signed a contract with CVBT to purchase Braehead. The sale was finalized in October 2008, with both CVBT and Dr. Stephens listed as Grantors on the deed. Following the sale, the Almys lovingly and painstakingly restored the home, in accordance with DHR's conservation easement.

The restoration of the home was completed in 2012. Today, Braehead serves as both the private residence of the Almy family, and as a bed and breakfast inn.

CVBT was pleased to work with Dr. Stephens and Robb and Diana Almy to ensure the protection of this remarkable property. Since historic homes require a great deal of care and attention, we commend Dr. Stephens and the Almys for their efforts to preserve an important part of Fredericksburg's history. **SL**

{A Nation Remembers, continued from page 3}

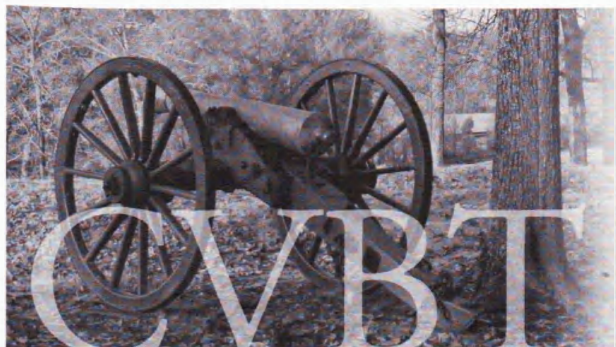
for "Lee to the Rear" as the Confederate commander threw himself into the battle, and then followed the troops as they engaged in the fierce battle at the Mule Shoe salient.

The tours were followed by an evening candlelight vigil, which brought out many emotions from the visitors to this hallowed ground. During the vigil, each of us, in our own way, reflected on the terrible fighting and loss that occurred at the Bloody Angle. An equally moving experience was the real time silent tribute that the National Park Service staff participated in for 22 straight hours on May 12, to honor the memory of the men who fought so bravely at the Bloody Angle for both the Union and Confederate forces. The final event of "A Nation Remembers" was the May 18 real-time walking tour that explored Grant's May 18, 1864 attack on Lee's forces near Spotsylvania Court House—

which has since been called the battle of "Lee's Last Line."

This intense fighting led to the subsequent battle at Harris Farm on the following day, May 19, 1864, which is described on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter.

We of CVBT were privileged to host our annual meeting during the Sesquicentennial of the Battles of The Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House. Our sincere thanks and a big huzzah go to the NPS and to all of our local friends and partners who helped to bring these battles to life for so many people. We especially applaud the efforts of the National Park Service, the Friends of Wilderness Battlefields, the Spotsylvania sponsors of the large scale re-enactments of the Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House, and the many local residents who gave their time, effort and voices to these very special commemorative events. **SL**



Copyright© 2014, by the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, Inc.

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. Contributions to the CVBT are tax-deductible.

Annual Member	\$ 35
Active Member	\$ 135
Sustaining Member	\$ 250

Patron	\$ 500
Benefactor	\$ 1,000
Life Member	\$ 5,000

Life Patron	\$10,000
Corporate Member	\$ 500
Corporate Patron	\$ 1,000



Central
Virginia
Battlefields
Trust

Post Office Box 3417
Fredericksburg, VA 22402
540-374-0900
www.cvbt.org

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
FREDERICKSBURG, VA
PERMIT NO. 500