

On The Skirmish Line

The Newsletter of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

From the President:

2004: The Year in Review/CVBT's Accomplishments

In last year's report, I informed our membership that 2004 was going to be an exciting year. I am proud to report that in 2004, CVBT has more than doubled the total amount of land it has helped to acquire and preserve. The full impact of this achievement can be appreciated better if we take things in sequence:

Clean Up at Harris Farm

In our last newsletter, we reported that the CVBT has agreed to accept responsibility for a portion of the Harris Farm battlefield. This site is within an area that saw action on May 19, 1864, during the last of the several battles fought around Spotsylvania Court House. The preserved area is only 1.737 acres, within a low-density residential neighborhood, but the terrain is still reasonably open and this representational site can be interpreted for visitors. The protected ground includes a wartime road, marked by a line of mature trees, as well as a monument erected by veterans of the First Massachusetts Heavy Artillery.

With a grant from the Sunshine Lady Foundation, the CVBT has been able to clear years of accumulated debris, properly care for the trees that line the wartime road, and remove twentieth century intrusions such as wire fences. This very necessary work has returned this acreage closer to its appearance

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In March, we purchased a 16.37 parcel of land on the Talley Farm ridge, where Stonewall Jackson led a flank attack on May 2, 1863, during the battle of Chancellorsville. This acquisition brought the total acreage that CVBT has protected in this part of the battlefield to just over 50 acres. Our first purchase in this area was 5 acres, in 1998. Next came a 24.83-acre acquisition, in 1999, followed by 3.85 acres in 2000. This latest project brings the CVBT's cumulative total in the flank attack area to 50.05 acres and shows the long-term benefits of a sustained effort.

In May, we held our annual meeting in Fredericksburg, but highlighted the battle of the Wilderness. Our Saturday tour took folks through a tract of several hundred acres, recently acquired by the National Park Service, which was the scene of James Longstreet's flank attack, on May 6, 1864. The woods have matured beyond the scrub growth that was in place during the Wilderness battle, but the tour group still needed to proceed with compass in hand, along the axis of the Confederate attack. That evening, CVBT presented its first ever Ralph Happel Award to former New York Congressman Robert Mrazek, for his exceptional contributions to battlefield preservation in Central Virginia. Our keynote speaker was the celebrated Gordon Rhea.

Also in May, the Houston Civil War Round Table presented CVBT with its Frank E. Vandiver Award of Merit. We are proud of this

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May 1st Battlefield Update:

Members dig deep to save Hallowed Ground

Fund raising continues, to help pay for 140 acres of the May 1 battlefield at Chancellorsville. Since the announcement of this acquisition in September, members have responded by sending in more than \$21,000. Our most generous donor has been Brian Pohanka, who sent \$5,000! Like all of us, he recognizes that this acreage will constitute the easternmost portion of the Chancellorsville battlefield that will ever be preserved. Development has already overtaken the Zoan Church ridge and the Salem Church field disappeared under asphalt years ago.

Development had been poised to consume this hallowed ground ever since 1996, when the state highway department announced plans to construct a beltway around Fredericksburg. The proposed road would have sliced through the heart of this historic terrain. Two coalitions eventually formed in response to this threat. The first one, which established itself very quickly, focused on preserving an exceptionally pristine section of the Rappahannock River. This group worked tirelessly to try to slow down the state's relentless highway building industry.

There were times when the whole effort appeared futile, but this group held together and kept to its work. The second coalition, with which most of our members are familiar, was the group that focused on preserving the Civil War battlefield. This latter effort was able to build on the significant gains made by the first group. The threatening highway has since been deleted from long range transportation plans, which removes a major threat to the Rappahannock River as well as the May 1 field. Each interest group clearly gained from the efforts of the other, emphasizing the importance of good communications, good liaison, and good planning for a sustained fight.

In addition to the preservation groups, key players included the Spotsylvania

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Membership Categories

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



On May 1st 1863, Union general Sykes moves his Corps down the Plank Road on his way to clash with Stonewall Jackson.

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Presidents Message

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recognition and will strive to be worthy recipients.

In August, the City of Fredericksburg closed Sunken Road to traffic and the National Park Service began its restoration of that dramatic scene. The CVBT is glad to have played a supporting part in this overall effort.

In September, the Civil War Preservation Trust and Tricord Homes announced that 140 acres would be preserved on the May 1 battlefield of the Chancellorsville Campaign. While CVBT is not a signatory to the agreement, we will contribute a quarter of a million dollars to effect this purchase.

With help from the Sunshine Lady Foundation, the CVBT published its second volume of *Fredericksburg History and Biography* and we have been gratified by sales during the year. We will soon present volume 3 of a journal that is attracting interest and additional research from around the nation.

In December, CVBT acquired an easement for 104 acres on the Fredericksburg battlefield. This open ground, known as Latimer's Knoll, was part of the fighting on the southern end of the field, on December 13, 1862. The value of this easement is nearly \$2 million, but did not cost this organization anything except its time and expertise.

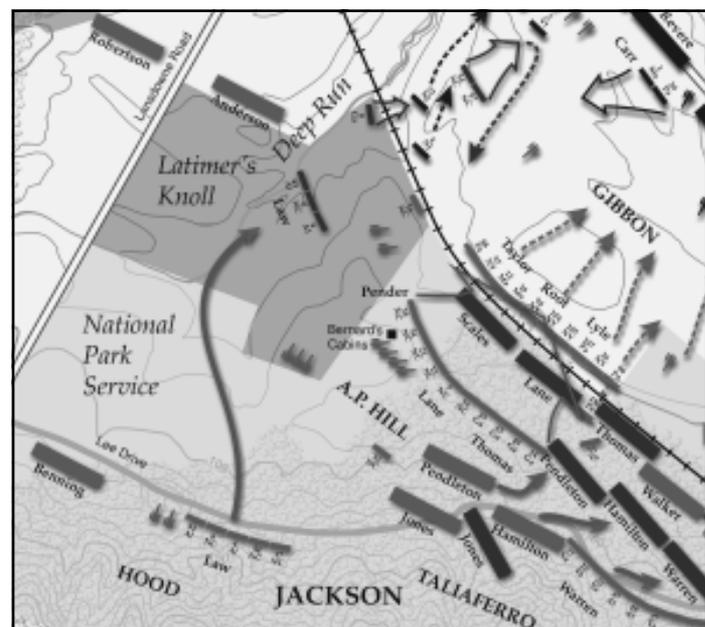
When the year began, CVBT had protected a total of 224 acres. As the year closed, CVBT had helped to preserve a cumulative total of 484 acres. What a year this has been, but what should be clear is that we did not do this on our own. We work in partnership with local governments, with the CWPT, and with developers such as Tricord Homes. Most impor-

tantly, though, we benefit from the confidence and dedication of our members, who selflessly support our mission. We could not do any of this without you.

CVBT protects Latimer's Knoll

As the year came to an end, CVBT accepted an easement for 104 acres on the Fredericksburg battlefield. This agreement, recorded at the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of Spotsylvania County on December 22nd, protects an artillery position known as Latimer's Knoll. From this slight promontory, guns under the command of Major Joseph White Latimer were able to rake the right flank of the Federal columns that attacked Prospect Hill, on December 13th, 1862.

The property will remain in private ownership, but the preservation easement protects this land from development. This spring, the CVBT will hold its Annual Meeting on this site, providing an opportunity for members to walk this ground with the historians who know it best.



Fredericksburg battlefield on December 13, 1862 at 2 to 5p.m.



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Brian Pohanka Receives

the Ralph Happel Award

On December 10th, the CVBT presented its annual Ralph Happel Award to **Brian Pohanka**, at an event that proved to be a veritable who's who of Civil War preservation. Following cocktails and



Ralph Happel Award recipient Brian Pohanka.

[He] has maintained the integrity of history, at a time when so much nonsense is being written and published.

dinner, President Mike Stevens opened the ceremony with a short review of Ralph Happel's career as the first historian of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. He described the bequest to the CVBT from Happel's estate, in 2002, and how the CVBT had subsequently developed an award for notable contributions to battlefield preservation in central Virginia. He noted Brian Pohanka's considerable work in preservation and then turned the microphone over to **Clark B. "Bud" Hall**, who acted as master of ceremonies. Bud welcomed Brian and his

family and then introduced a whole series of Brian's friends and colleagues:

Ed Bearss praised Brian as a renaissance man, noting his interest and skills in battlefield archaeology, archival research, movie consulting, and preservation.

Rob Hodge – member of the CVBT Board of Directors - spoke to Brian's movie directing skills, as observed on the set of *Gettysburg*.

Ed Wenzel – Ed had worked with Brian and Bud to save Chantilly, in the early 1980s. Their interest and inspiration was the seed of the old Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, which is now the Civil War Preservation Trust.

Ted Alexander – senior historian at Antietam - observed that Brian has maintained the integrity of history, at a time when so much nonsense is being written and published.

John Hennessy – chief of interpretation at the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park – noted how Brian had become a preservationist before most other historians.

Bob Luddy – President of the Brandy Station Battlefield Association - flattered the assemblage by noting that the quality of a man is seen in the quality of the friends around him.

Bill Styple – a longtime friend who has a deep and abiding interest in Phil Kearny - took the occasion to present a portion of the general's (now demolished) bathtub.

Mike Musik – just retired from the National Archives - told of Brian's tenacity in his research. Mike has assisted re-



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searchers for several decades and certainly knows whereof he speaks.

Kim Holien – an Army historian based at Fort Myers – praised Brian’s research and dedication.

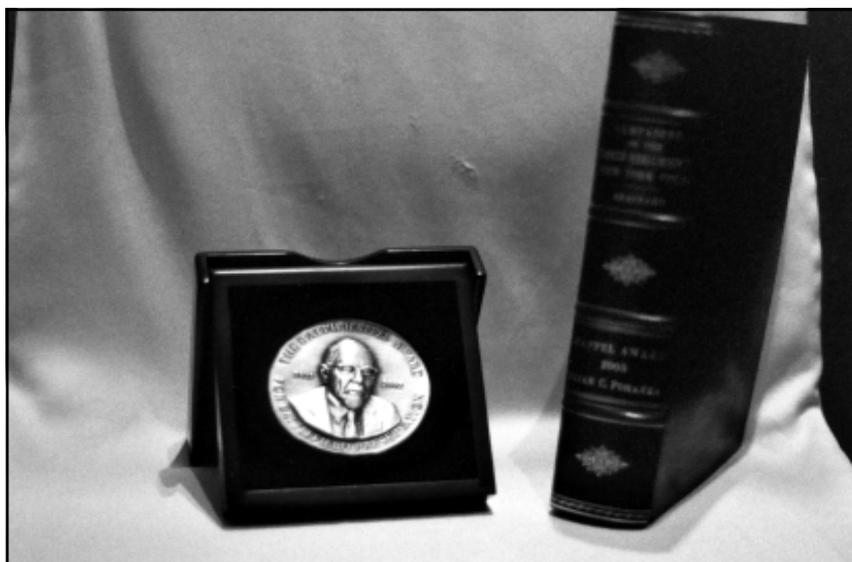
Mike Kraus – a friend and fellow reenactor - recounted some of their experiences on the set of *Cold Mountain* in Romania.

Doug Brouder – representing the Civil War Preservation Trust – spoke to Brian’s active preservation.

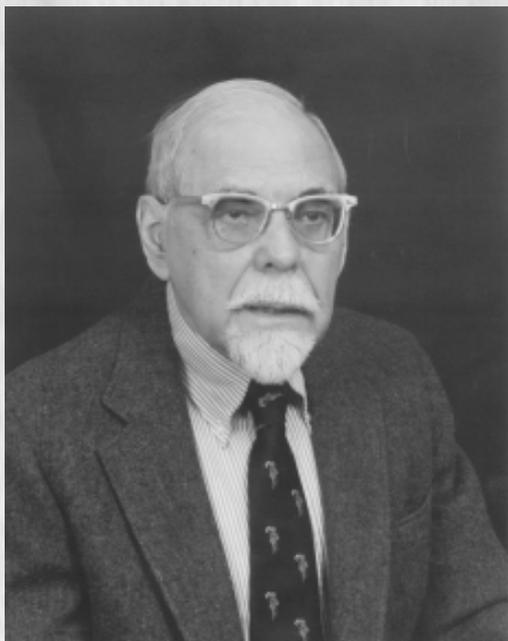
Dr. Richard Sommers – head of the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center at Carlisle Barracks – remembered Brian as the undergraduate at Dickinson College who had the good sense to avail himself of the archival resources at the Center.



Brian Pohanka (center) mingles with guests during the dinner given in his honor.



Ralph Happel Award recipient Brian Pohanka (center) mingles with guests during the dinner given in his honor.



RALPH HAPPEL
(1911 - 2002)

A native of Fredericksburg, Virginia, Ralph Happel led a distinguished career as historian and author with the Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park from 1936 until his retirement in 1972. A graduate of James Monroe High School, he received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Virginia. During the Great Depression, he headed the local Writer's Project under the Works Progress Administration, researching many of the lesser-known historical sites and treasures of the Fredericksburg area.

Brian himself finally spoke and reminded a group (that really did not need reminding) of the connection between the soldiers and the land – places that had not only been made immortal, but which were now the very fabric of America.

Mike Stevens closed the ceremony, calling on those present to continue to be involved in preservation, as exemplified so well by Brian Pohanka.

May 1st Battlefield Update

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County Board of Supervisors and Tricord Homes. The elected body had already joined with other jurisdictions to ensure the proposed beltway was removed from the regional, long-range transportation plan.

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Harris Farm Cleanup

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at the time of the battle and will now be properly maintained (much to the relief of the neighbors). The First Massachusetts Heavy Artillery monument will also be kept clear of overgrowth. The site is surrounded by a housing development, but the rolling ground remains relatively open and this protected area is worth a stop. Following this action, the two armies disengaged and marched south, toward the North Anna River.

The Spotsylvania Board also took specific action to support the proposed preservation plan by allowing Tricord Homes to develop housing on the acreage that does not have historic value. Tricord Homes also agreed to forego development of a 55-acre portion of the battlefield that a previous Board of Supervisors had rezoned for commercial use. This extremely generous provision allowed the Civil War preservation community to acquire virtually all of the ground it had identified as significant.

Clearly, partnerships with reasonable expectations and a willingness to work together can achieve great things. The Spotsylvania Board of Supervisors, Tricord Homes, and the Civil War Preservation Trust are the parties to this agreement. The CVBT is pleased to have had a hand, since 1997, in this fight and is pleased to help pay for this ground as well. Donations can be sent to us as well as to the CWPT, since we are all in this together.



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