

On The Skirmish Line

The Newsletter of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

Individual Donors CVBT's Backbone

Members are the mainstay of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust. We preserve historic ground only to the extent members agree that what we have purchased is significant and worth their donations. We continue to operate without paid staff so that member donations can be used almost exclusively to acquire dirt and grass.

Some members have asked if we have a large donor or two who provide the bulk of our working capital. We have a handful of large

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Foundation Contributions

Once again, the Ukrop's Fund has provided a \$700 grant to the CVBT, through its Community Foundation of the Rappahannock River Region. This Foundation's philanthropy is most welcome and their commitment to the community is admirable. The CVBT extends its sincerest thanks, yet again, to this wonderful organization.

Chancellorsville, May 1st Battlefield Still Threatened

In our last newsletter, we reported how a portion of the May 1, 1863 battlefield at Chancellorsville had been rezoned from agricultural to commercial use. The Trust expressed its interest in purchasing this land, but the landowner does not appear to be willing to enter into negotiations.

We believe this land is important for two reasons. First, this ground is truly historic. These open fields are where Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson took control of the unfolding campaign. They boldly moved to attack, even though confronted by a larger force. The Union Army of the Potomac, under Joseph Hooker, had already gained a tremendous advantage by crossing to the south side of the Rappahannock River. Once across this barrier, the Northern army advanced toward Fredericksburg. Lee was at a distinct disadvantage because two divisions of James Longstreet's Corps had not yet returned from their winter encampments at Suffolk. Facing a superior force, Lee and Jackson sought to throw their adversary off balance by an aggressive confrontation.

On May 1, 1863, elements of these two armies collided on the terrain recently rezoned for the construction of office buildings. Hooker did not reconnoiter the open ground held by his troops, where Federal artillery would have been able to dominate the battlefield. Instead, he pulled his army back into the woods, around the Chancellorsville crossroads. Over the next few days, Lee and Jackson used the cover of those woods to execute

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Land Threatened

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an astonishing flank march, and to surprise and devastate the numerically superior Federal army. The first day's confrontation set the stage for the entire battle of Chancellorsville.

The second reason to preserve this ground is that it constitutes the eastern gateway to the Chancellorsville Battlefield administered by the National Park Service. As you would expect, this Federal agency has done an excellent job in preserving the ground in their charge, although modern encroachments have occurred as well. The land sought by the Trust, which the National Park Service is not authorized to purchase, would provide a visual and physical shield between the core battlefield and the approaching gas stations, houses, and convenience stores. Visitors must be able to see the relationship of this open land to the wooded areas to the west. Any land acquired will inevitably become the easternmost limit of what will ever be preserved.

The Trust expressed its interest in this land and tried to meet with the property owner. Unfortunately, his attorney announced meetings on short notice and at inopportune times. When the CVBT Board of Directors was subsequently unable to get together with the property owner, he informed the Trust he would no longer be available to meet with us. Sometimes this happens, so the Trust immediately responded that it still desired to enter

into good faith negotiations, should the property owner change his mind. This is where the matter has stood since February 19th. We remain optimistic that something can be worked out, but the price will certainly be high. We will keep our members informed as this project develops.

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Round Table Corner

In March, the Civil War Round Table of Eastern Pennsylvania provided \$3,000 to the Trust, to help us purchase threatened battlefield land. This organization has already been extremely forthcoming with donations in the past and continues its strong efforts with this latest donation. Robert K. Krick, who is known to students of the Civil War for his unparalleled expertise on Stonewall Jackson and the Army of Northern Virginia, accepted these funds on the Trust's behalf.

This particular Civil War round table has also been quite forthcoming with praise for the Trust. They have called us "one of the best grassroots organizations in Civil War preservation...." Such words reinvigorate us in our efforts. We do not have any paid staff, which ensures that most of the donations we receive will end up in gaining ground. We have expenses, like postage and website fees, but our directors handle all of the operations which keep an organization functioning. This is our promise to you, that we will expend your contributions on dirt and grass, instead of paid staff. Thanks.

On The Skirmish Line

is published for the CVBT membership at 604-A William Street, Suite 1, Fredericksburg, VA 22401. Telephone numbers are 540-374-0900 (local), 888-374-0900 (toll free). 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.

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donors whose generosity is quite welcome and we are pursuing grants from various foundations. The backbone of the Trust, however, is individual members and a network of Civil War Round Tables. The following list recognizes those persons and organizations (including the large donors) who have selflessly helped to protect our heritage as members of the CVBT. Readers will be able to see who is truly instrumental in preserving hallowed ground, but it may be easier to just look in the mirror.

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Our web page continues to expand, through the generosity of member Gary Embry. The CVBT web site is well worth a visit and includes an inordinate number of links to other Civil War web sites. Pay us a visit. You will not be disappointed.

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