



ON THE skirmish line

Newsletter of The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

Trust Acquires Another Property in the Jackson Flank Attack Sector

Once again, the Trust's patience and presence has resulted in the acquisition of a piece of battlefield land *at a very good price*. It is not a large parcel in and of itself, but it is another 1.6 acres preserved in the important flank attack area of the Chancellorsville battlefield. As our veteran members know, the CVBT has diligently focused on the flank attack area since the Trust was formed. With this latest addition, we have acquired a total of 70 acres of battlefield terrain in that sector, which is in addition to the substantial acreage that the National Park and the Civil War Trust have protected.

Battlefield preservation is a long term endeavor and we appreciate the steadfast support of our members. They understand that a series of individual purchases is required to provide for the overall preservation of historic terrain. A five-acre purchase in 1998, for instance, kept a house site from being developed on the ridge where Jackson's Confederates crashed into the Union Eleventh Corps. Acquisition of 25 acres on the Talley Farm ridge the next year linked two portions of the National Park's holdings, where one day visitors will be able to stand and see the same vista that Stonewall Jackson saw when he reconnoitered the

Federal position. In 2012, the Trust acquired a 13-acre tract that included a visually intrusive, castle-like building that we demolished shortly thereafter. In between these purchases have been others, less dramatic perhaps, but steadily filling in the map that represents a significant part of the Chancellorsville battleground.

This latest parcel is on the south side of the wartime Orange Turnpike (modern State Route 3). It lies east of the Orange Plank Road (which leads to the Wilderness battlefield) and west of the Dowdall's Tavern site. Saving another 1.6 acres of battlefield land does not sound like much, but it looms large when it could have been the site of a new house and shiny cars, inevitably attracting the eye of visitors to this growing preserved landscape.

On the afternoon of May 2, 1863, Stonewall Jackson's troops deployed in a line that extended north and south of the Orange Turnpike (State Route 3). The Confederates moved from marching order into line of battle and then waited for the signal that would launch them out of the woods and into the vulnerable Federal flank. Around 5:30 p.m., Jackson turned to Robert Rodes, whose division was stretched out primarily south of the road, and asked: "Are

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you ready, General Rodes?” Rodes assured him that he was and Stonewall turned that quiet spring afternoon into pandemonium, with the simple order: “You can go forward then.”

With a nod from Rodes, bugles immediately relayed the attack order up and down the line and the Southerners stepped off with a yell. George Doles’ Georgia brigade straddled the Turnpike, but as they went forward, the attack developed very differently to their right and left. North of the road, the Confederates pushed ahead rapidly, closing in on the Federal units, most of which were facing south. The Southern attackers pushed them out of the way before they could effectively redeploy. South of the turnpike, Alfred Colquitt slowed his brigade, claiming he saw Federals on his own flank. Colquitt’s hesitation halted Dodson Ramseur’s brigade behind him and thus kept several thousand Confederates out of the flank attack for a critical period. Ramseur finally persuaded Colquitt to resume his advance and they joined the main attack as it closed in on a hastily formed Federal line near Dowdall’s Tavern.

In the maelstrom of the surprise attack, the Federals managed to briefly establish lines facing west. These were quickly overwhelmed, but they did hold for a short period and allowed other units to withdraw with some semblance of organization. The first intermediate line occurred near Wilderness Church, where some low hilltops provided places to try to anchor a defensive position. The hard pressed Federals established a second intermediate line near Dowdall’s Tavern, again using the terrain to some limited advantage. The Trust’s latest acquisition is in the heart of this chaotic action, in the area between Wilderness Church and Dowdall’s Tavern.

This acquisition has all the hallmarks of a classic CVBT purchase. We identified this land for preservation over fifteen years ago. We maintained a regular contact with the owners,

which we do for many properties. This past year, when the owners finally indicated they were ready to sell, we were the folks they knew were interested in buying. As a result, we soon reached an amicable agreement.

In this instance, we are paying \$50,000 for a parcel that is assessed at \$48,000. The typical trend in this sometimes volatile real estate market is to have to pay above assessed value and there are still plenty of property owners who continue to ask two to three times what their land is worth. Our strategy in those instances has been to wait until circumstances change and a responsible deal can be made. We would certainly move quickly if there was in imminent threat of development, but much of the time we can be cautiously patient. This time, the owners set a realistic price at the outset and things moved quickly.

We have the cash on hand to pay this \$50,000 cost immediately and will not have to carry any interest costs as a consequence. We are able to do that because our members have generously helped us establish a war chest that allows rapid acquisition when needed. As we like to think with all of our efforts, this is the right property at the right price. Help us to replenish our war chest quickly though, so we can keep moving on. We closed on the property on May 25th and not having to pay interest on a bank loan ensures that member donations truly go for dirt and grass.

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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