



ON THE
skirmish line
Newsletter of The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

ANNUAL MEETING IS A
GRAND SUCCESS

ON MAY 5TH, MEMBERS OF CVBT GATHERED on the Slaughter Pen Farm for our Eleventh Annual Meeting. This 205-acre site was the scene of intense action on December 13, 1862 and one of the highlights of the day was the opportunity to walk this ground with Frank O'Reilly, the historian most knowledgeable of its many details and nuances. The tour started along the Richmond Stage Road, where the Union columns formed for their assault, and proceeded across the open terrain that Federal troops traversed before they could cross bayonets with the Confederate defenders. Participants saw first hand where ditches and folds in the ground either protected troops or left them painfully exposed to enemy fire. Frank also noted the many related sites that abut the Slaughter Pen, where

Confederate artillery was posted, where General Meade's Pennsylvanians broke through, where Confederates formed for a counterattack.

Rain began to fall 15 minutes after the tour began, but the veteran Civil War enthusiasts broke out their umbrellas and pressed on. No one turned back and no one complained. For a tour with Frank, why would anyone have even considered it? Afterward, those who had not yet read Frank's book, *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock*, were able to purchase copies and get them signed by the author. Beer and wine were on hand for the social hour before dinner, but event planners, watching the steady rain, also had a fresh pot of coffee ready when the tour group returned. { CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 }



THE INDOMITABLE
FRANK O'REILLY
LEADS A HARDY GROUP
OF CVBT MEMBERS
ON A RAINY TOUR OF THE
SLAUGHTER PEN FARM.

Following the tour, a larger group gathered for dinner and the meeting itself. As is our tradition, dinner consisted of barbeque, both Virginia and Carolina style. The board can never agree on which is better, so of course we had to have both.

CVBT President Mike Stevens called the meeting to order and reviewed the organization's many accomplishments. He noted that the Trust had saved well over 700 acres of ground since its organization in 1996, the latest success being the land upon which the group was meeting that evening.

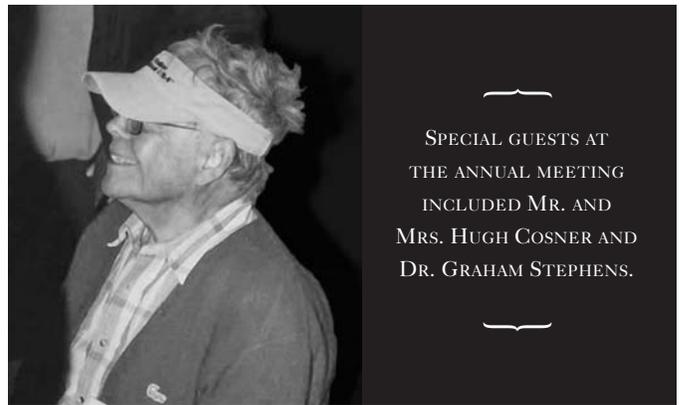
Dr. Stevens thanked several people for their efforts on behalf of CVBT. Ed Minnich, for instance, has stepped forward to keep the Harris Farm site mowed and looking well kept. The Sunshine Lady Foundation continues to assist in publishing the Trust's journal, *Fredericksburg History and Biography*. Dr. Graham Stephens is working with the Trust to put preservation easements on the Braehead mansion.

President Stevens took great pleasure in announcing that the Silver Company will donate additional acreage at

Grant's Knoll, on the Wilderness battlefield. The Silvers have already very generously donated 5 acres in this area and this new donation will increase the site to more than 11 acres. Dr. Stevens emphasized that former board member Johnny Mitchell had been instrumental in working with the Silvers to effect this transfer.

Dr. Stevens then introduced former Spotsylvania Supervisor Hugh Cosner, announcing his donation of \$100,000 for Slaughter Pen Farm. Mr. Cosner spoke to the group, describing his many efforts during his four years on the Planning Commission and another 12 years on the Board of Supervisors, to keep a promise to the family who owned the property, to keep the farm intact. Votes were sometimes quite close, over proposals to encroach on the land, but in the end, Mr. Cosner prevailed and his generous gift to the Trust will help to pay off the note.

Noel Harrison, Resource Manager at the Battlefield Park, wrapped up the evening by providing an intriguing review of the many descriptions and observations in the historical record that relate to the farm before it became a battleground. Travelers and local residents who passed by the farm fields or who worked nearby described the area in various accounts and letters, gentle reminders of the continuity of life before its name became Slaughter Pen. **sl**



SPECIAL GUESTS AT THE ANNUAL MEETING INCLUDED MR. AND MRS. HUGH COSNER AND DR. GRAHAM STEPHENS.



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Silver Company will expand Grant's Knoll donation

Once again, the Silver Company has stepped forward to preserve ground in the Wilderness. Several years ago, the Silver Company donated a six acre parcel near Grant's Knoll to the CVBT. This is the area where, in May 1864, U.S. Grant watched the Union Army of the Potomac go into battle, at the opening of what would be called the Overland Campaign. On this site, the commander from the West, listened to reports from the wooded battleground and smoked one cigar after another. At the end of two exceedingly stressful days, with both flanks of his army caved in and casualties numbering in the thousands, he made the fateful decision to continue south, toward Spotsylvania Court House.



The Grant's Knoll site also has historic associations from an earlier war. In 1781, the Marquis de Lafayette and a division of Continental soldiers camped through there, spending the night (and foraging) near the Lacy

property, known as Ellwood. Lafayette had maneuvered to be able to link up with Mad Anthony Wayne and his Pennsylvania troops, so he could turn and challenge Lord Cornwallis, who had come up from the Carolinas.

American soldiers tramped this road through the Wilderness before the Union and Confederate soldiers were born.

At the annual meeting, President Mike Stevens announced a follow-up gift from the Silver Company, in the form of additional acreage at Grant's Knoll. These very welcome donations from the Silver Company have ensured that this gateway to the Wilderness battlefield will remain wooded. Development pressure is mounting in the Route 20 corridor, but this preserved ground will always be reminiscent of 1864. We will report on this gift further upon closing, but members should know that Jud Honaker, with the Silver Company, and Johnny Mitchell (former president of CVBT) have been working diligently to finalize this donation. Be sure to thank them personally if you see them. **sl**

The Directors' Cut

At the annual meeting, three current directors were elected to another term, including Bill Kinnamon (third term), Mike Greenfield (second term), and Rob Hodge (also a third term). These three individuals stand ready to reap the benefits of board membership, which consists mostly of hard work. As we continue to stress to our members, the CVBT board requires folks who contribute substantially to the mission. Bill Kinnamon is an attorney and handles the countless legal tasks associated with land acquisition.

Mike Greenfield monitors CVBT-owned properties and sees to their appropriate maintenance.

Rob Hodge is a media specialist and active fundraiser.

At the meeting following the annual events, the Board elected new officers. Mike Stevens will remain the Trust president. Erik Nelson has been installed as Vice President. Jerry Brent will remain Treasurer and Harriett Condon will assume the duties of the Trust's Secretary. The Board is always gratified by the support of our members and we always look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our annual events. **sl**

Founding Member Honored with Ralph Happel Award

DURING THE CVBT'S eleventh annual meeting, the Trust awarded Enos Richardson its Ralph Happel Award for significant battlefield preservation. Mr. Richardson was a founding member of the CVBT, the organization's first president, and its guiding force in adopting the philosophy of "dirt and grass." He turned his considerable energy and legal expertise toward acquiring many of the properties that have since become the Trust's legacy to the people of the United States. Although no longer a board member, Mr. Richardson continues to be active in battlefield preservation.



{ CVBT PRESIDENT MIKE STEVENS PRESENTS
THE TRUST'S RALPH HAPPEL AWARD
TO ENOS RICHARDSON. }

and third awards went to nationally recognized Civil War preservationists Brian Pohanka and Ed Bearss. This fourth award was the first one presented to someone with Fredericksburg connections, in effect recognizing the exceptional effort required of this local organization to acquire hallowed ground in the face of the unprecedented development pressure.

The CVBT knew from the beginning that it had only a limited amount of time to acquire and preserve significant battlefield terrain. Mr. Richardson helped the Trust to rise to the challenge and to move forward forcefully.

The CVBT has awarded three other Ralph Happel Awards. The first was to former New York Congressman Robert Mrazek, who recognized that battlefields were a national resource and supported their preservation at the highest levels of government for many years. The second

As he noted in an article in the Fredericksburg *Free Lance-Star*: "You can only save [battlefields] once. You don't get a second chance." Irrepressible people like Mr. Richardson have been our key to success and it was our pleasure to be able to appropriately recognize his leadership. **sl**

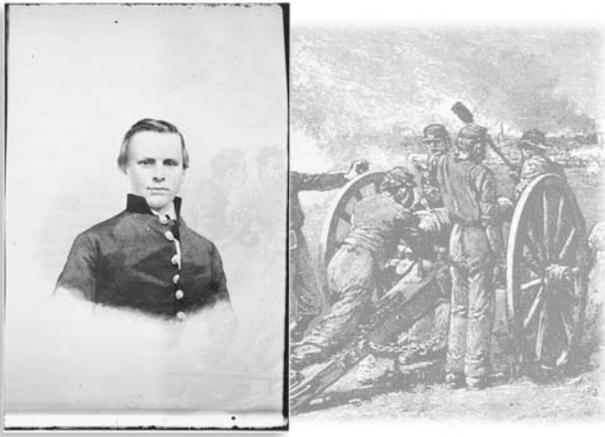
CVBT Passes a Milestone in the Slaughter Pen Farm Campaign

\$500,000

THE CVBT PLEDGED TO RAISE \$1 MILLION, as its contribution toward acquisition of the Slaughter Pen Farm. This amount will come entirely from private donations. Our partners, the Civil War Preservation Trust are pursuing all available grants and doing their own fundraising (as many of you know). Rather than compete for public funds with the CWPT, we have pursued private funds entirely.

At the time of the annual meeting, we had forwarded \$500,000 toward our pledge. This coming July, we will exceed this halfway mark and forward another \$100,000.

This exceptional progress would not be possible without the generous support of our dedicated members. We ask for funds and we ask again and every time, members of the CVBT respond. As always, we promise to direct donations toward the acquisition of historic ground. For an organization of our size, we still have a very limited staff. This small overhead is possible because our board of directors remains actively involved in all aspects of organizational administration. We strive to be good stewards of your generous donations and direct them to the purpose intended—dirt and grass! **sl**



Pelham's Corner

Those who drive by the corner of Route 2/17 and Benchmark Road will have noticed a great deal of development activity there. National-chain drug stores have established themselves nearby, as has a shopping center anchored by a major grocery store. Subdivisions are sprouting up as well.

In the middle of this development frenzy, the corner where John Pelham brought two guns into battery, on the morning of December 13, 1862, remains intact and will soon be deeded to the CVBT. When the Trust formed, in 1996, it sought to acquire this corner, but the real estate was priced beyond anything the Trust could afford at that time. The Silver Company recently acquired the land, however, and carved out the best portion for the Trust, while developing the rest.

Older members will recall that we obtained two small parcels in this area in 1999. They were no more than 50 feet wide and well back from the historic corner. In exchange for these two small lots, no more than 2/3 of an acre combined, the Silver Company gave the CVBT a full acre on the corner itself. Enos Richardson, deserving recipient of the Ralph Happel Award, had the foresight to have CVBT acquire those initial bits of land (one of which even had a drainage easement running through it).

The site has been graded out, but careful observers will have seen that the ground itself has not been disturbed. Instead, additional dirt on top of the site has provided positive drainage, while allowing for any future archaeological work. Over the years, relic hunters have picked this ground clean, but a professional archaeological survey and dig may still be able to recover information. At any rate, the developer has treated the ground properly. In addition, the granite Pelham marker has been reset, two new wayside exhibit panels have been installed, and the Virginia highway historical markers have been relocated along Benchmark Road.

During the coming year, the CVBT will use additional funding provided by the Silver Company to develop a suitable plan to ensure the site evokes its wartime significance. The goal is to make this ground a compelling site, even though the surrounding acreage has been altered. Respectful partnerships with local developers have provided excellent opportunities to preserve historic ground. Pelham's battery position is only the latest example. **SL**

The Lower Pontoon Crossing: Road to the Slaughter Pen

A DEFINING COMPONENT OF THE BATTLE OF Fredericksburg, in December 1862, was the fight to establish pontoon bridges across the Rappahannock River. Two crossing sites were opposite the town itself and on December 11th Mississippi riflemen fired on the Union bridge builders as soon as a morning fog began to burn away. The subsequent bombardment of the town and intense street fighting made the horrible day even worse. The river crossing south of town, however, proved very different.

The terrain below Fredericksburg is open ground, which provided fields of fire for Union artillery. During the morning darkness of December 11th, Federal engineers staged materials and floated pontoons. Confederate pickets could hear the wagons and working parties, but did not see where the crossing was being made. At daybreak,

sporadic fire upstream made clear that the upper pontoon bridging efforts were being contested, but the lower site remained undiscovered in the morning fog until the work was nearly complete.

When the Texans on picket duty finally raised the alarm, Union commanders ordered up several batteries of artillery, which quickly dominated the field. While the Mississippians found cover in Fredericksburg's many brick buildings, from which to fire on the bridge builders, the Texans had only a two story frame building, Alfred Bernard's plantation house called "The Bend," from which to lay down effective musketry. The wood siding was no match for artillery, though, and the Confederate infantry rapidly withdrew across the open ground, leaving the crossing unopposed. **SL**



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 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.

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