



# ON THE skirmish line

Newsletter of The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

## A Special Fund Raising Tour Will Follow the Booth Escape Route

**O**n November 5th, 2011, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust will sponsor an important fund raiser for battlefield preservation. This day long tour will follow the entire escape route of Lincoln assassin John Wilkes Booth from Ford's Theater to the Garrett farm in Caroline County. We are especially fortunate to have Michael W. Kauffman, noted author of *American Brutus*, as our tour guide. Mr. Kauffman's knowledge of Booth, the man as well as the assassin, is based on his exhaustive research. His commentary will provide the tour group a more thorough understanding of Booth's motivation and cunning planning. We will visit numerous sites associated with the escape, including the Surratt and Mudd Houses, and follow as closely as possible the actual route taken by Booth to his final destiny at the Garrett farm.

The tour will depart from and return to the Country Inn & Suites located at 5327 Jefferson Davis Highway at I-95 exit 126 in Fredericksburg, VA. The tour includes a sit-down lunch and transportation by a motor coach equipped with air-conditioning and bathroom. Snacks, beverages, entrance fees and gratuities are all provided.

Library of Congress

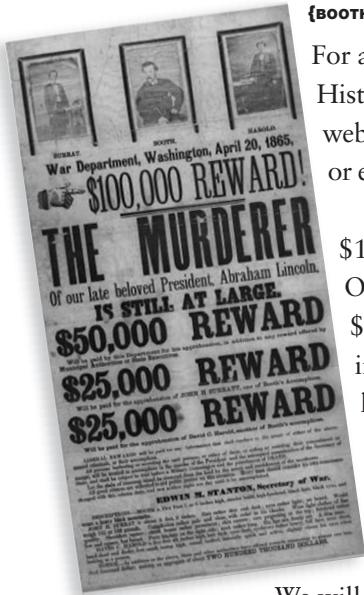


In order to take advantage of visiting Ford's Theater before it is open to the general public, we will need to leave promptly at 6:30 am. This early departure also allows us to tour the Surratt House and Museum before it opens to visitors. The Country Inn & Suites is offering a special rate of \$85 for Nov. 4-6. Please make your reservations by calling 540-898-1800. Be sure to request the Booth Tour group rate. The group rate is available until Oct. 21.

We will be stopping in Port Royal at the Peyton House where Booth was refused shelter by Mr. Peyton's daughter, Sarah Jane. During this stop, Mr. Kauffman's book *American Brutus* will be available for purchase in paperback from Historic Port Royal for \$15. Also, Mr. Kauffman will be autographing his book at this time. If you wish to read the book before the tour, and this is recommended, it can be ordered for \$15 plus \$5 for shipping from:

**Historic Port Royal**  
**Attn: Bill Henderson**  
**P.O. Box 233**  
**Port Royal, VA 22535**

{CONTINUED ON PAGE 2}



**{BOOTH ESCAPE TOUR, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1}**

For additional information on Historic Port Royal, please visit their website at [www.historicportroyal.com](http://www.historicportroyal.com) or e-mail them at [wehlsu82@aol.com](mailto:wehlsu82@aol.com).

Tickets for this special tour are \$125 per seat if postmarked by Oct. 21. The price after that is \$140 per seat. Remember, this includes bus transportation, lunch, snacks, beverages, entrance fees and gratuities. All proceeds after actual expenses will be used for battlefield preservation.

We will be having lunch at Captain Billy's Crab House on the Potomac River shore. Please select your lunch from the meals listed on the registration form and don't forget to indicate fried or broiled where appropriate. Since we will be trying to follow the escape route as closely as possible, it will not be an early lunch. Although we will have plenty of snacks available, we suggest that everyone eat a hearty breakfast. For those staying in the motel, a brown bag continental breakfast will be provided, as we are leaving before their normal breakfast hours. Coffee will be available for all participants. We will return to Fredericksburg at approximately 6 pm.

The information concerning the tour and the registration form are also available on the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust web site at [www.cvbt.org](http://www.cvbt.org).

A registration form is included in this copy of *On the Skirmish Line*. **SL**

# SAVE THE DATE

## FOR OUR NEXT ANNUAL MEETING

The 2012 CVBT annual meeting will be held on April 27, 28 and 29. Back by popular demand will be the expanded format which will include a Friday afternoon tour. Our focus on Friday and Saturday will be Culpeper County and the engagements which occurred at Cedar Mountain, Morton's Ford, Kelly's Ford and Brandy Station. As we did last year, we intend to explore some ground not normally visited, and provide our attendees with the opportunity to see some new sites. Visits to several antebellum homes will also be on the agenda. We are excited that our newest Board Member, Clark "Bud" Hall, will be leading most of these tours. On Sunday, our half day tour will focus on Fredericksburg. Complete details will be included in our next newsletter, and will also be posted on our website. In addition, all current members will receive a separate mailing during the first part of 2012. We look forward to seeing you for a very special weekend next April. **SL**

### April 2012

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#### The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, Inc. Board of Directors

- |  |   |   |
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# Witness trees join battlefield fight—protection of historically significant trees in the U.S.

American Forests (July-August 1993)

by Deborah Fitts



INTRODUCTION BY CLARK “BUD” HALL:



*Deborah Fitts, a native of Andover, MA and graduate of Smith College, worked most of her life as a professional journalist. CVBT members will recall her Civil War News byline for more than a decade while Deb served as the Associate Editor for that publication. During the early 90's, Deb also served for two years as the Director of Communications for the Civil War Trust—a predecessor organization of today's Civil War Trust. Deborah died in July 2008 from breast cancer, and in September 2008, the Civil War Trust posthumously presented her with the prestigious, “Lifetime Achievement Award,” conveyed “for outstanding commitment to Civil War battlefield preservation.” Deborah's husband, Clark B. Hall (now a CVBT board member), accepted the award on his wife's behalf. The attached article on “witness trees”—the first time this designation appeared in print, a moniker created by Deb—was written when Deborah served as the communications director for the Civil War Trust.*

Offspring of these old monarchs that survived shot and shell are helping fund the purchase of historic Civil War landscapes.

The last of the old veterans who wore the blue and gray of America's Civil War died almost half a century ago. But surprisingly—and poignantly—a small host of living witnesses survive to this day.

These venerable bystanders are trees. The shot and shell of great battles crashed around them. They sheltered famous commanders, served as signal platforms, shaded the wounded, or simply formed part of the landscape at a crucial place and day in the Civil War—the tragic, watershed event of our nation's history.

Now these trees are playing a role in a national movement launched by The Civil War Trust to ensure that the historic landscapes of the Civil War—the battlefields where thousands fought and died for their beliefs—are preserved and protected.

The nonprofit Trust has joined with American Forests' Famous & Historic Trees program to collect seeds from these “witness” trees. Seedlings from the trees profiled here and many others are grown at the Famous & Historic Trees nursery in Jacksonville, Florida, and are available to anyone who would like to plant a living remnant of the Civil War's vital history.

The program allows participants to join with The Trust in its campaign to acquire endangered battlefields. Only an estimated 15 percent of significant Civil War battlefields are preserved, and key sites are at risk of being lost. A portion from each Famous & Historic tree sale will go to the Trust for this purpose.

If these witness trees could talk, what stories they would tell—dramatic events that marked a period of idealism, courage, and sacrifice unparalleled in our history.

Today our only living witnesses to the Civil War are mute. But if we listen, they do talk to us—if we are willing to remember the past and learn from the lessons of history.

## BIGELOW'S BATTERY OAK

This swamp white oak, which today measures 15 feet around, witnessed some of the most desperate fighting in the Battle of Gettysburg. The 9th Massachusetts Battery under Captain John Bigelow was decimated here on July 2, 1863. The unit, fighting alone and virtually unsupported, was outnumbered and overrun by Confederate infantrymen advancing on the crumbling Union Line.

The battery's bugler, Charles Reed, made this sketch as he waited to go into action. The oak is at the right, serving

{CONTINUED ON PAGE 4}

as headquarters for General Daniel Sickles, commander of the Union Third Corps, who is standing in the shade with his staff.

The battery advanced and set up a heavy fire, but was driven back into the corner of a farmyard where the tree stands. Bigelow was ordered to hold this position “at all hazards” to give federal forces in the rear time to regroup. The battery lost almost half of its 92 men, four of its six guns, and 80 of its 88 horses. Bigelow, hit twice, was brought to the rear by Reed, who later received a Medal of Honor for the deed.

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### ANTIETAM SYCAMORE

This giant stands at the end of Burnside Bridge on Antietam battlefield in Maryland, where on September 17, 1862, it witnessed the bloodiest day in American history. Of that day's 23,000 casualties, a number fell at the bridge that morning during a series of vain attacks by Union General Ambrose Burnside. This wartime engraving shows the 51st Pennsylvania and 51st New York Volunteer regiments finally storming the bridge in the face of spirited resistance by Georgia troops on the far shore. The young sycamore is clearly visible at the near end of the bridge.

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### PICKETT’S CHARGE WALNUT

This rather spectral black walnut on the Gettysburg battlefield in Pennsylvania is the only tree left known to have witnessed that famous assault: Pickett’s Charge.

The tree stood along the Union line of battle near a coppice that was the focal point of the grand Confederate attack on July 3, 1863. The battle of Gettysburg, with its 45,000 casualties, is often regarded as the turning point of the war and the Confederacy's “high tide.”

As the present-day photo suggests, the tree's canopy has greatly diminished with advanced age. The walnut appears prominently in the distance of an 1880s Cyclorama painting—a portion is shown here—that is on display at Gettysburg National Military Park.

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### WILDERNESS COFFEE TREE

This Kentucky coffeetree—which at 13 feet in circumference is among the largest in Virginia—still grows on the lawn of the 1780 home “Ellwood” at the Wilderness battlefield.

The amputated arm of Confederate General Stonewall Jackson was buried at Ellwood May 3, 1863. Jackson's men mistakenly shot him near there the previous evening as he reconnoitered after his stunning victory at Chancellorsville. Jackson died May 10, depriving Robert E. Lee of his “right arm” and the Confederacy of one its greatest commanders.

Two Union generals headquartered at Ellwood during the May 1864 battle of the Wilderness. Jackson's arm is the only marked grave in its cemetery, part of Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park.

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### THE BROMPTON OAK

In this photo taken at Fredericksburg, Virginia, in May 1864, wounded Union soldiers rest under a tree known today as the giant Brompton Oak. The Washington Artillery of New Orleans fired down on advancing Union troops from near this tree, located on Marye’s Heights, helping to win a major Confederate victory in a battle that resulted in nearly 18,000 casualties.

The tree grows on the lawn at Brompton, the wartime home of John Marye. The house is still standing and today is part of Mary Washington College.

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*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.*



# CVBT Hosts Preservationist Robert Hicks

**B**est-selling author and Civil War preservationist Robert Hicks joined members of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust and the general public at a reception at the Fredericksburg Country Club (near the Slaughter Pen Farm) on the evening of September 7.

CVBT President Mike Stevens began the program by noting the importance of battlefield preservation from three perspectives: to honor the memory and sacrifice of the men who fought and died on those fields; to preserve those lands as much needed open space; and as a basis for heritage tourism. CVBT Board member Kevin Leahy further described the economic benefits of battlefield preservation. Mike then introduced Robert Hicks as the “spiritual leader” of Franklin’s Charge in Franklin, Tennessee, which has orchestrated the largest reclamation of battlefield land in the United States.

Mr. Hicks, who is the author of two best-selling novels – “The Widow of the South” and “A Separate Country,” acknowledged that he was not always interested in the Civil War. But after moving to Franklin in 1974, he volunteered on the Board of Carnton, a historic home whose former mistress had overseen the reburial of nearly 1,500 Confederate soldiers on her grounds. Mr. Hicks raised money to restore the house, and soon became increasingly concerned about the encroachment of development upon battlefield lands.

He then became involved with a small group of similarly concerned citizens. In 2005, Franklin’s Charge was incorporated. While preservation of battlefield land is a key goal of the organization, its members also support heritage tourism and educational efforts in the area.

Since much of the battlefield at Franklin was at one time considered “lost” (turned into sites such as pizza restaurants and a golf course), Franklin’s Charge has taken an incremental approach to reclaiming these lands - preserving one piece of hallowed ground at a time. Once the group has preserved one parcel, they move the goal line forward to the next challenge. Throughout this process, the Board members of Franklin’s Charge seek to instill cooperation between various parties, and try to sit down at the table with others to work out their differences whenever possible.

One of the Charge’s current goals is to build the largest Civil War museum in the nation. The focus of this museum would be to tell stories and convey the humanity of the war. In Mr. Hicks’ words, the true story of the Civil War is about how we became a nation, bound together as Americans. He views the Civil War as the most important moment in American History, but also the most costly.

Both Mr. Hicks and Mike Stevens made reference to the abandoned General Motors plant up the road, and the hallowed ground upon which it sits. That land, which played a pivotal role in the Battle of Fredericksburg, is contiguous to the Slaughter Pen Farm, which the Civil War Trust purchased in June 2006. The Civil War Trust is currently seeking to purchase the GM plant site. Both men urged that the plant infrastructure be removed from the property, and that the underlying battlefield be fully restored.

President Stevens concluded the evening by noting that it is both our privilege and responsibility to ensure that the land at the GM site is preserved, and that our actions now will determine the legacy we leave for future generations. **SL**

# CVBT CONTINUES ITS OUTREACH EFFORTS

## Fredericksburg Heritage Festival

The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust participated in the 2011 Fredericksburg Heritage Festival, which is the City's premier family-friendly event on the Fourth of July. During the day, the streets of historic downtown Fredericksburg are blocked off, and the area is brimming with locals, tourists and vendors. We set up a booth at the Festival in order to meet a wide variety of people, especially those who are not normally involved in Civil War matters. CVBT President Mike Stevens, Bob Krick, Jerry Brent, Bill Kinnamon and Linda Wandres staffed the booth during the day. Tom Van Winkle and his wife Lisa arrived early to drop off the tent, table and other materials. Our primary goals at the Festival were to educate visitors about the ongoing need for battlefield preservation, and to increase CVBT's visibility in our local community.

## Spotsylvania Courthouse Antiques Appraisal

The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust and Spotsylvania County co-hosted an antiques appraisal event on August 13th. Working with the Department of Economic Development & Tourism, Trust Board members and volunteers staffed the event. Six appraisers donated their time and provided approximately 55 evaluations of various items, mostly from the Civil War era. Participating in this effort

were President Mike Stevens, Mike Greenfield, Jerry Brent, Joe Rowe, Tom Van Winkle and his wife Lisa, and volunteer Scott Eyestone. This event was held in conjunction with the Library of Virginia's Civil War Legacy Project for Document Digitization. A small fee was charged for the appraisals, with all of the funds going to CVBT. Altogether, we raised a total of \$450 for battlefield preservation through appraisals, donations, new memberships and DVD sales.

## 150th Commemoration of the First Battle of Manassas / Bull Run

CVBT also set up a booth at the reenactment of the First Battle of Manassas / Bull Run, which was held on July 23 and 24. Despite sweltering heat, nearly 20,000 spectators and reenactors flocked to Pageland Farm for the event. The Manassas reenactment marked the first time that we were able to use our complete new display. Communications and web site director Tom Van Winkle and Display Coordinator Scott Eyestone represented CVBT along with Tom's wife Lisa. They were able to show visitors CVBT's Civil War Fredericksburg "Then and Now" video to supplement the display and their own accounts of CVBT's accomplishments. Tom, Lisa and Scott shared the story of CVBT's battlefield preservation victories with many people during the two day reenactment. SL

## 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. As 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 (we are not like magazines that like to get renewals six months in advance of expiration). You might also consider upgrading your membership level, to increase our capability to save hallowed ground in central Virginia.

## CVBT receives local grant for Harris Farm

The CVBT is pleased to announce the receipt of a \$5,000 grant to be used for interpretive signage at Harris Farm. We are extremely grateful to the Community Foundation of the Rappahannock River Region for its generosity in making this award. Through its Duff McDuff Green, Jr. Fund, the organization promotes outdoor recreation opportunities, preserves cultural and historic assets around the region and benefits the lives of the area's young people.

With only one part-time staff person, CVBT generally does not have the resources to interpret sites that it acquires. CVBT's goal is, to the greatest extent possible, to eventually transfer its properties to the National Park Service (NPS) so they may be properly interpreted and accessed by the public.

One site that CVBT holds that is open to the public and marginally interpreted is Harris Farm. A 4.8 acre parcel off of Route 208, CVBT owns 1.7 acres in fee simple and holds an easement on 3.1 acres. The easement originated with the old APCWS and was transferred to CVBT by the Civil War Trust in 2004. This area saw combat action on May 19, 1864 and became the last of the battles fought around Spotsylvania Court House. The parcel contains a monument dedicated to the First Massachusetts Heavy Artillery, which experienced its baptism of fire at Harris Farm. The monument was constructed in 1901.

One of the casualties who fell on this field was Private James Zachariah Branscomb, CSA, Company D. Third Alabama Regiment. In 2009, descendants of Private Branscomb dedicated a plaque on the property to his memory. CVBT encourages other descendants of soldiers who participated in the Battle to so honor their ancestors.

CVBT maintains the site and is committed to enhancing visitors' experiences, having already completed several improvements. These improvements include: (1) the removal of a number of dead trees and the clearing of brush; (2) the planting of rows of young cedar trees to replace the original trees which lined the trail from the road to the monument; (3) the stabilization and painting of the original wrought iron fence surrounding the monument; and (4) the construction of a small paved parking area for visitors, including buses. Much of this work has been performed by members of the CVBT Board.

While sites administered by the NPS are nearby, this is the only site that interprets the action on the last day of the Spotsylvania Campaign. Although this site is known and visited by Civil War enthusiasts, the lack of road signage on Route 208 and the site's absence from most maps limits potential visita-



tion. In light of the impact that the Civil War Sesquicentennial will have on visitation to the area, CVBT plans to have the Harris Farm site included in the Virginia Civil War Trails program. Driving tours following major campaigns have been created by this program, and a series of regional brochures are available. The Virginia Civil War Trails' state map is a guide to exploring 388 sites in Virginia associated with the Civil War. The map leads travelers through the historic Virginia countryside for a first-hand encounter with the people and places that played a key role in the conflict. Participation in the program will result in the Harris Farm site being included on the map with a roadside directional sign erected on Route 208. A requirement of the program is that CVBT fund an interpretive panel at the site, constructed according to the Trails program specifications.

In addition to inclusion in the Trail program, CVBT desires to better explain the significance of the site by creating an interpretive trail from the new parking area to the monument. Currently, there are two old and badly worn interpretive panels near the monument. These panels will be replaced with two new ones at different locations which will expand interpretation of the site and result in a meaningful and educational experience as visitors walk from the new parking area to the monument.

Thus, the total project includes three interpretive panels: one required by the Trails program and two to replace the existing worn and dated ones. The cost per panel, which includes everything from graphic layout to installation, is \$2,600, resulting in a total project cost of \$7,800. The grant from the Community Foundation will cover almost two-thirds of the cost.

As previously mentioned, CVBT envisions a real opportunity to further its mission during the Civil War Sesquicentennial. Visitation to the areas battlefields will see a marked increase. These visitors will be both from the local community and from distant places. Their experiences will be enhanced and their overall understanding of our local Civil War battles, and the War as a whole, will be increased by the visibility and interpretation this project will bring to Harris Farm. **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](http://www.cvbt.org).

Contributions to the CVBT are tax-deductible.

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### Membership Categories

Annual Member	\$ 35	Patron	\$ 500	Life Patron	\$10,000
Active Member	\$ 135	Benefactor	\$ 1,000	Corporate Member	\$ 500
Sustaining Member	\$ 250	Life Member	\$ 5,000	Corporate Patron	\$ 1,000

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# Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

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## REGISTRATION Booth Escape Route Tour / Nov. 5, 2011

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

### MEAL(S) SELECTION(S)

All meals include a garden salad, baked potato, green beans, beverage and dessert.

	Number	Fried	Broiled
Meal # 1 One Crab Cake (fried or broiled)	_____	_____	_____
Meal # 2 Two pieces of Flounder (fried or broiled)	_____	_____	_____
Meal # 3 Crab Melt (crab salad w/melted cheddar)	_____	_____	_____
Meal # 4 One half slab of Ribs in BBQ sauce	_____	_____	_____
Meal # 5 Vegetarian plate (salad bar, vegetable of the day, & baked potato)	_____	_____	_____

**Tickets: \$125 per seat if postmarked by Oct. 21; \$140 thereafter.**

*Make checks payable to CVBT and  
mail with your registration form to:*

**Central Virginia Battlefields Trust  
P.O. Box 3417  
Fredericksburg, VA 22402**

Phone 540-374-0900.

execdirector@cvbt.org

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