

On The Skirmish Line

The Newsletter of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

The Big Picture: How the Pieces Fit Together

Soldiers fight battles with constant attention to the tactical advantages of terrain. Hilltops can provide sweeping fields of fire, gullies can become covered approaches, woods will mask a gathering force, and streams can slow down moving troops. The military importance of these types of features far outweighs who owns them. On preserved ground, it is possible to retain historic names and we are all familiar with Miller's cornfield, Spangler's spring, and Marye's

Heights. Areas that have not been protected, however, usually have new owners and may even have been subdivided into smaller lots. To preserve battlefield land, it is necessary to acquire the individual lots from a whole variety of owners and reassemble them into a cohesive holding that can be interpreted and understood.

Over the years, the CVBT has acquired 17 individual parcels on four major battlefields.

They have ranged in size from lots of 0.3 acres to farm tracts that exceeded 100 acres. Our members have stepped forward as each project has been pursued, to provide the much needed funds to effect a purchase. Months can go by, however, with reports of active negotiation, but no announcement of an actual purchase. We admire the faith our members exhibit in supporting our work and we think it is appropriate to return the favor and show not only where we have been, but where we intend to go. Anyone looking at a map can readily see the specific areas we seek to protect at each battlefield.

In Memoriam: Brian C. Pohanka

It is with profound regret that we report the passing of Brian C. Pohanka, who died on June 15, 2005. Battlefield preservationists, however, have ample cause to celebrate his life and achievements.

Brian was among a handful of committed historians who founded the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, in Fredericksburg, in 1987. This step opened a concerted and successful effort to acquire and protect the hallowed ground of American battlefields threatened with development. He served on the APCWS board of directors as well as on the board of the Richmond Battlefields Association and several similar organizations. In December 2004, the Central Virginia Battlefields



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Fredericksburg

The CVBT's first project was acquisition of 9.5 acres on Willis Hill. A partnership with the National Park Service and the Civil War Preservation Trust made this victory possible. The National Park Service immediately incorporated this site,



Brian Pohanka

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Trust bestowed on Brian Pohanka its Ralph Happel Award for significant achievement in saving battlefields.

Brian's record of battlefield study and protection will continue. In addition to generous bequests to the Little Big Horn battlefield and to the Civil War Preservation Trust, he provided one million dollars, to be split evenly between Virginia's two grass roots battlefield preservation groups – the Richmond Battlefields Association and the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust.

We are pleased with this donation, but also aware of our responsibility to use it wisely. The CVBT will direct these funds for their intended purpose of acquiring dirt and grass.

with its impressive fields of fire, and included it in their plans to restore Sunken Road to its wartime look.

Many other sites related to this campaign have also been protected. The upper river crossing is preserved and interpreted by the National Park Service. The middle pontoon crossing is on land held by George Washington's Fredericksburg Foundation, with an NPS easement on it. The street fighting that occurred subsequent to the river crossings occurred in downtown Fredericksburg, which is a National Register Historic District.

Opportunities for preservation occur primarily on the south end of the field, where the Union army's Left Grand Division attacked Stonewall Jackson's position. In this area, the CVBT acquired 0.63 acres where John Pelham brought two cannons forward to fire into the flank of the Union assault columns. The Trust has since traded these small parcels for a full acre of ground at the actual corner of the historic roads. The Silver Companies made this deal possible and the new site will allow an interpretation of this dramatic scene. Another developer donated an 11.9 acre wooded site in this area. The site includes gun emplacements and trenches on a slight rise that covered the approach toward the south flank of Lee's army.

Last year, the CVBT also received an easement on 104 acres of land, known as

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Latimer's Knoll, adjacent to the National Park. This Confederate artillery site compliments the nearby artillery position within the Park known as the Bernard Cabins. All told, the CVBT has managed to protect slightly more than 126 acres on the southern part of the Fredericksburg field. The current effort is to acquire and protect the path of one of the Union assaults on the south end of the field. Soldiers called these fields the Slaughter Pen farm. If this area can be preserved, the CVBT will have achieved all of its identified goals for the Fredericksburg battlefield. There are other nearby sites which are of great interest, such as the Belvoir house (site), where Stonewall Jackson stayed with his wife and child, but there will be no further opportunities to protect expanses of open ground. Development will have taken the rest.

Chancellorsville

The CVBT has engaged in an extensive effort to acquire ground where the Chancellorsville Campaign unfolded. A total of 301 acres have been protected in Spotsylvania County. In addition, the Trust owns another 11.62 acres in Fredericksburg that are related to the Second Battle of Fredericksburg (but which was still part of the Chancellorsville Campaign). Of this acreage, just over 100 acres have been sold to the National Park Service, for incorporation into the National Park (and therefore accessible to the American people).

The CVBT's efforts have occurred at both ends of the battlefield, which is bisected by State Route 3 (the old Orange Turnpike). One hundred and forty acres,

which is called the Lick Run battlefield was protected just this past year, in partnership with the Civil War Preservation Trust, Spotsylvania County, and Tricord, Inc. Another 99 acres, known as McLaws' Wedge was the Trust's first project in Spotsylvania County. Other acreage has been protected on the approach to the



Past CVBT President John Mitchell at a press conference during the fight to save the Chancellorsville battlefield. Photo by Steven Stanley.

Chancellor House (11.89 acres), but the main effort has been in the area where Stonewall Jackson made his flank attack on May 2, 1863. Systematically, the CVBT has acquired five parcels, totaling 50 acres of this critical ground. So far, a five acre parcel has been sold to the National Park Service and incorporated into the National Park.

The Trust continues to work at both ends of the far-flung Chancellorsville field. We have accepted the challenge to ensure the integrity of this field will be maintained along a rapidly developing corridor and we appreciate the support of our members for this concerted effort.

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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

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Wilderness

The CVBT's only acquisition on the Wilderness field has been 6 acres at Grant's Knoll. Once again, the Silver Companies were persuaded to donate this acreage to the Trust. The site provides an important buffer from nearby commercial development and helps to maintain the ambiance of this gateway into the Park. Plans for additional acreage are also concentrated in the Route 20 corridor.

Spotsylvania Court House

The CVBT controls 40 acres on the Spotsylvania battlefield, on the south side of the Po River. This area loomed large during the initial phases of this lengthy campaign and the Trust holdings include

earthworks, an intact picket post, as well as the Block House Bridge site. Of immediate concern at Spotsylvania, though, is acreage in the vicinity of Heth's Salient, near the old court house itself. At issue is a portion of the Alrich Farm that is threatened by a new state-funded road meant to bypass the court house area.

At Spotsylvania, the Trust has also taken control of limited acreage at what was once the Harris Farm. This site was initially acquired by the APCWS, but the CVBT has assumed custody as well as the responsibility to maintain it.

The CVBT continues to solicit donations so that we can act quickly when opportunities arise to acquire historic ground. In this lucrative real estate market, time is of the essence. We do not intend to pay exorbitant prices, so we must remain vigilant to circumstances, stay in touch with property owners, and be prepared to pay a fair price for the land we believe must be preserved for future generations.



Post Office Box 3417

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(540) 374-0900 ■ www.cvbt.org

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