



AMERICAN  
BATTLEFIELD  
TRUST ★ ★ ★

PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

Dear Friend and Fellow Battlefield Preservationist,

What would you say if I told you that today, for just 1.7 cents per square foot, you can help acquire some of the most important and pristine battlefield land in America?

Further, what if I told you that for that 1.7 cents per square foot, you would be helping to preserve forever the absolute heart of one of the most important Civil War battlefields?

And what would you say if I told you that by acting today, you will be helping to fulfill one of the final wishes of a friend, the most extraordinary historian of our lifetime, Ed Bearss, who passed away last September at the age of 97?

As you can see on the enclosed battle map, I am talking about the Champion Hill battlefield in Mississippi, now acknowledged by historians far and wide as the most decisive battle of the most crucial campaign in the most important theater of the Civil War.

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*“Well, I guess my favorite place at Vicksburg is probably where the Middle Road and the Plantation Road cross in the lee of Champion Hill, where the battle was decided. And some of the land is protected there and some is not.”*

— ED BEARSS (1923–2020), FORMER HISTORIAN EMERITUS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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My colleague, the Trust’s own Chief Historian Garry Adelman, rightly sums up the Vicksburg Campaign as “the fight that cut the Confederacy in two.” And it is impossible to understand the Vicksburg Campaign if you do not understand the Battle of Champion Hill.

Ed Bearss knew that. That’s why, out of all the battlefields he tromped, and mapped, and studied all over the world, his favorite place was the Crossroads at Champion Hill.

Amazingly, the very land on which the battle raged almost exactly 158 years ago has remained in the Champion family, protected and handed down through generations.

In 2007, the Trust purchased an easement from the family on this hallowed ground to protect it from development. While that was a notable accomplishment in its own right, today a truly extraordinary opportunity is at hand.

You and I now have the chance to purchase outright — and fully preserve forever — the entire 144-acre tract from the Champion family in an historic transaction.

The purchase will transfer full ownership of the property to the American Battlefield Trust. We will then steward the land until we can transfer it to the National Park Service for inclusion

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1140 Professional Court, Hagerstown, MD 21740 | phone: 301-665-1400 | email: [membership@battlefields.org](mailto:membership@battlefields.org)

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<Name>, you were a critical part in helping us purchase the easement at Champion Hill. Now we have the chance to buy it and save it forever. I hope I can count on you to help once again.

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in the Champion Hill unit of the newly expanded Vicksburg National Military Park where it truly belongs — thereby assuring perpetual public access to this important chapter of our nation’s history.

Under the terms of our agreement with the preservation-minded members of the Champion family — who have faithfully protected this land since the last musket fired — the Trust will purchase the historic tract for \$185,000, a price that is greatly reduced by the easement we obtained 14 years ago. But the news gets better.

You may recall hearing that last year, after Ed Bearss passed away, the Trust mounted a memorial campaign in Ed’s honor (with the permission of his family). Because Ed so loved this theater of the War all his life, we created a restricted fund to which people could donate, to be used exclusively for future Vicksburg Campaign transactions.

Thanks to generous friends like you, we raised an astounding \$78,000 for the Ed Bearss Tribute Fund! And while at the time, we did not know we were going to be able to use those funds to help acquire the land that meant the most to Ed ...

... I hope you will agree that using those funds now, dropping our cost to just \$107,000 to acquire the most crucial 144 acres of the “Crossroads” forever, well, that is about as perfect as it gets. I’d even like to think that Ed may have had something to do with making this all come about!

That boils down to just 1.7 cents per square foot. Yes, you read that correctly: **1.7 cents per square foot!** I just checked online; even the cheapest indoor-outdoor carpet runs anywhere from 30 to 40 cents per square foot. An opportunity like this to save immeasurably important hallowed ground only comes around once in a lifetime. Which is why I need your help today.

Looking again at your battle map, the historic land we are working to acquire from the Champion family is at the very core, center, heart (whatever synonym you want to use) of the battlefield, just yards away from where General Ulysses S. Grant set up his field headquarters at the “Champion House.”

***“... the largest, bloodiest, and most significant action of the Vicksburg campaign.”***

—TERRY WINSCHER

Our good friend Terry Winschel, author and recently retired Chief Historian at Vicksburg National Military Park, pulls no punches about the importance of the fight on Champion Hill. It was, he says, “the largest, bloodiest, and most significant action of the Vicksburg campaign.”

The focal point of the battle was the crest of Champion Hill, along the left center of the Confederate line.

Picture it in your mind ... 7:00 a.m. on the clear morning of May 16, 1863 ... A brigade of Alabamans stretching west, along a ridge. A brigade of Georgians running south along the Jackson Road to the all-important Crossroads formed by the intersection of the Jackson, Middle, and Ratliff Plantation roads.

Whichever army controlled the Crossroads controlled the battlefield, and that would be determined largely by the force that occupied the crest of Champion Hill, just 800 yards to the north.

The bloodshed began when two Federal divisions, part of Grant’s Army of the Tennessee, advanced toward the Hill. With a mighty cheer, the men in Union blue slammed into the

Confederates along the ridge and drove them back, fighting their way toward the Crossroads.

Confederate General John C. Pemberton ordered his finest combat division into action to check the Federal advance and secure the Crossroads. The Rebel Yell could be heard above the din as battle-hardened Missourians and Arkansans launched a vicious counterattack, rolling like a wave across the vital Crossroads and re-taking the crest of Champion Hill.

The Southerners' surge, which threatened to split Grant's army, was finally brought to a halt by the arrival of fresh Union troops and the punishing fire of massed batteries. When additional Federal divisions sprang forward on the Middle Road, Pemberton's men were driven from the field in what was called "wild confusion and panic."

In seven or eight hours of some of the hardest fighting of the entire War, the Union army suffered nearly 2,500 casualties while the Confederates lost almost 4,300 men, forcing the Southerners' retreat.

***"The fate of the Confederacy was sealed when Vicksburg fell."***

—GENERAL ULYSSES S. GRANT

The following day, Pemberton's forces were routed once more along the Big Black River and driven back into the defenses of Vicksburg, where soldiers and townspeople alike endured a brutal 47-day siege before surrendering.

With the fall of Vicksburg — called the "Confederate Gibraltar" — the last remaining Southern stronghold on the Mississippi River, Port Hudson, also capitulated. It was a pivotal Federal victory that changed the course of the Civil War, and the future of our nation.

You'll likely recall that Vicksburg had long been a focal point of Union attention. Abraham Lincoln said, "We can take all the northern ports of the Confederacy, and they can still defy us from Vicksburg. It means hog and hominy without limit, fresh troops from all the states of the far South, and a cotton country where they can raise the staple without interference."

Confederate President Jefferson Davis referred to Vicksburg as "the nail head that held the South's two halves together." Grant succinctly put it this way: "The fate of the Confederacy was sealed when Vicksburg fell."

All of these factors combine to make the 144 acres we can buy "must-have" ground, holding incalculable value for future generations.

And to reiterate, after using the \$78,000 we have been holding in reserve from the Ed Bearss Fund, we can now purchase the entire 144-acre tract of sacred, rural Mississippi land for \$107,000 — a shockingly small 1.7 cents per square foot.

Yet, cost is only part of the equation.

By acquiring this land right now, you are ensuring that future generations will be able to come to Champion Hill (as well as battlefields all across America) and learn in an exceptional outdoor classroom. Thanks to you, the young, and perhaps those not-so-young, will feel the chills you and I so often get at such a historic place ... hear the distant echoes of drums beating and shots fired ... spend time reflecting on all that took place ... and, hopefully, come away more informed citizens.

Because you are absolutely key to our purchasing Champion Hill today — and all the battlefield preservation work we do — I want to recognize your generosity and commitment to our cause by extending a truly special offer today.



For your gift of \$63 today — an amount that serves as tribute to the Champion Hill battle year, 1863, and saves 3,705 square feet of hallowed ground — I will be honored to send you this gift:

**A special Preservation Edition of Terry Winschel's acclaimed  
*Triumph and Defeat: The Vicksburg Campaign.***

In this paperbound, in-depth battle study — 218 pages in length and featuring 50 photos, illustrations, and original maps — Terry weaves a professional lifetime of personal experience and scholarship into an extensively researched history. An extra highlight is the book's foreword by Ed Bearss. (On a personal note, Ed and I shared a birthday, June 24, and it is just now hitting me that this will be the first June 24th in two decades that I won't be able to call him and wish him a happy birthday. We miss him terribly, but I can think of no better way to honor his dedication to the cause of historic preservation than to save this land at Champion Hill.)

Ed's stirring words serve as a prelude to the 10 fascinating chapters of *Triumph and Defeat*, which, together, cover every major aspect of the Vicksburg campaign, including military operations, leading personalities, citizens under siege, and, of course, important battles.

As I hope my letter to you has made clear, by helping to acquire Champion Hill, you're protecting a place not only where American history was made ... you're safeguarding a place where America itself was made.

That's why again I ask you — indeed, urge you — to please send your gift of \$63 or more knowing we can buy, and protect forever, all 144 acres of Champion Hill for just 1.7 cents per square foot.

I also hope you will consider sending your gift right away, even today if you possibly can. Our purchase deadline for Champion Hill, June 30th, is approaching fast ... a deadline we don't want to miss. After all, we don't want to let this exceptional opportunity pass us by.

Please know in advance, my friend, that I am deeply humbled by your tremendous dedication to the essential mission of the American Battlefield Trust. Thank you for sharing so much of your own success in our crucial work of battlefield preservation, work that is more important right now than it has ever been before.

With warmest regards,



David Duncan  
President

P.S. The opportunity to own these 144 absolutely priceless acres of Champion Hill has taken more than 14 years of determination, cultivation, and negotiation. As you know, in Civil War battles, success or defeat was often a matter of moments. The moment to capitalize on our hard work is at hand. I hope I can count on you to help raise the \$107,000 we need to secure this hallowed ground by sending your gift of \$63 — or more — today. To reiterate, your gift of any amount will save irreplaceable, sacred battlefield land at a cost of just 1.7 cents per square foot. In return, I will be delighted to send you a special Preservation Edition of Terry Winschel's remarkable book, *Triumph and Defeat: The Vicksburg Campaign*. Thank you again for all you are doing to save our country's important history.