



AMERICAN
BATTLEFIELD
TRUST ★ ★ ★



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Dear Dedicated Preservationist,

It was 1864, and the new General-in-Chief of the U.S. Army, Ulysses S. Grant, heard his orders from President Lincoln loud and clear: *The president needed victories — and he needed them quickly.*

Lincoln staked his presidency on reunifying the nation, and he believed that could only be achieved by defeating the Confederates decisively.

But to do so would take pressure. *Unrelenting pressure.* The stakes were so high that General Grant decided to personally accompany the Army of the Potomac as it attacked General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia on its own home turf.

What followed was the ***Overland Campaign*** — a series of battles over the course of 40-odd days that saw gains and losses for both sides. In the end, more than 83,000 men were wounded or killed.

Fast forward to the present day, and we find ourselves facing new pressure on these hallowed battlegrounds and combatting new threats on some of the very same acres.

As I'm sure you know, the demand for land in Northern Virginia is so high right now that residential developers will pay almost anything and build almost everywhere — including on hallowed battlefield acres. It's a feeding frenzy!

We're in need of new victories — preservation victories — to secure the future of our nation's battlefields, which is why I'm writing to you urgently today about **125 acres of battlefield land in Virginia, at Spotsylvania Court House, New Market, and Trevilian Station**, that we have the opportunity to save in perpetuity.

I'll cut right to the chase:

The cost to purchase these tracts is more than \$1.4 million. But, thanks to anticipated help from federal and Virginia state grants as well as the Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation, every dollar you give will be quadrupled in value.

Will you help us raise \$346,000 to save these hallowed grounds forever?

While I won't pretend to understand what General Grant felt as he launched his offensives in 1864, I can understand what it's like to feel pressure on these acres and to feel the bitter sting of lost opportunities ...

Recently, we lost a vote over land use at another battlefield that could result in up to 5,000 new homes and millions of square feet of industrial infrastructure like data centers and distribution warehouses being built in a development called "Wilderness Crossing." We are appealing the decision, but our success is not assured.

The vote loss is a painful reminder that we must keep fighting, against the odds, to secure every victory we can, including the hallowed ground we have the chance to save today.

Turning back to those three tracts, let me tell you a little more about the threats that face each.

As you know, **Spotsylvania Court House** was the second battle of the Overland Campaign, and one of the bloodiest ever fought on American soil. On May 12, the fifth long day of fighting, *more than 20 hours of hand-to-hand fighting followed a massive Union attack!*

Yet, despite its significance, not all the important land from this crucial battlefield has been preserved. Protecting this property would be a huge step in opening up the story of Spotsylvania's eastern front, which has long been overshadowed. Unfortunately, because this land fronts a main road and is considered prime for commercial development, the landowner received a huge offer from a builder and nearly said "Yes." We have only been able to keep the seller on our side by matching their offer.

It will take many hundreds of thousands of dollars, but we simply cannot lose this history.

At **Trevilian Station**, we also face an urgent threat. This important property is under threat of residential development or possibly a massive solar farm. I'm sure you remember that the Battle of Trevilian Station was the largest all-cavalry battle of the Civil War and is well known as "*Custer's First Last Stand*." You may also remember that thanks to support from dedicated preservationists just like you, we have saved more land at Trevilian Station than at any other battlefield!

We cannot lose an opportunity to save 99 acres here — helping us to tell this battle's story even more fully for future generations and growing closer to battlefield completion.



Spotsylvania Court House was the site of one of the top five bloodiest battles of the Civil War.



Structure west of the site of the Trevilian Station depot.

The third property includes 21 acres at **New Market**. While not officially part of the Overland Campaign, I'm sure you'll recall that the Battle of New Market resulted from Grant's larger 1864 offensive strategy to advance simultaneously on multiple fronts. General John C. Breckenridge's Confederates defeated Union forces under General Franz Sigel, stopping cold one of Grant's offensives that spring.

The tract of land we are targeting at New Market is among some of the most strategically and historically located properties we have ever worked to save.

When you look at the enclosed map of the New Market battlefield, you can see that the yellow swaths of unprotected land are literally surrounded by the battlefield. Unfortunately, a McMansion visible from multiple critical viewpoints could be constructed on the targeted property.

However, our great partners at the Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation have taken the lead to save it and have asked for our help. I'm hoping we'll come through and raise the money we need.

There is a reason history books are written *after the fact*, my friend. Today we know the outcome of the Civil War, and we know that the Overland Campaign is considered, overall, a strategic Union victory ...

But in May and June of 1864, there were so many moments when the final outcome did not seem assured at all. The story of the Civil War was still being told, day by day, battle by battle, moment by moment.

In fact, two of the battlefields we're working to save today, New Market and Trevilian Station, were the scenes of decisive Confederate victories. At Spotsylvania Court House, one of the top five bloodiest battles of the Civil War — the outcome of which is now considered inconclusive — Union casualties actually outnumbered Confederate casualties by an estimated 6,000.

We too find ourselves in the midst of a battle, not knowing what the future will hold and wondering what our story will be when the history of battlefield preservation is decisively recorded many years from now ...



Confederates fought and defeated Federals at the Battle of New Market, disrupting one of Grant's planned offensives in the spring of 1864.



A drawing of the Battle of Trevilian Station by James E. Taylor.

*Will we succeed in **permanently protecting** the places where our young men fought and died, where battles were lost and won and history was made? Will we win the fight to save the land where America's story unfolded? Will future generations take their children to the sites we preserved for posterity?*

*Or will remaining battlefield lands **disappear forever** under asphalt and concrete, clearing the way for data warehouses and solar farms, until little is left of these hallowed grounds but lonely roadside markers?*

I do not mean to seem pessimistic about the future. **The pressure we face is unprecedented, and we must take action now while we still can.**

But I can tell you this with grim-jawed determination — we will keep on fighting. We will pursue every opportunity to protect America's battlefield land. As I write to you today, we are fighting to protect land in *Kentucky*, in *New York*, in *South Carolina*, in *Tennessee* ...

And we are fighting in Virginia to save 125 acres at Spotsylvania Court House, Trevilian Station, and New Market!

I've depended upon you so many times before. So often, in fact, I have been honored and deeply grateful to write to you and share stories of our victories together — lands we have saved, battlefields we have preserved.

But I honestly don't know what the nature of my letters to you will be a year or two from now. As the recent vote over the Wilderness Crossing development has shown, the well-funded developers keep on coming, and many rural counties and municipalities will surely be taken in by the short-term opportunities of new construction. Money is no object for these developers, and it's clear they don't share our values.

*Battlefield lands are a vitally important living testament to America's valor and honor, reminders of our history and heritage, lessons of the past and for the future, and an enduring statement about **what we value** as a nation, and as a people.*

I believe I know what you value, without any doubt. I consider you a loyal friend and partner to our cause. And I hope you will contribute today, giving as much as you can — be it some or a lot — knowing every dollar will be matched in impact by 4-to-1. Thank you!



'Til the battle is won,

David N. Duncan

David N. Duncan
President

P.S. The pressure to develop on battlefield land is **unrelenting**. But our will to win is **unending** and **uncompromising**. Please give what you can today to help me raise \$346,000 to conserve 125 critical battlefield acres at Spotsylvania Court House, Trevilian Station, and New Market.