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Dear Friend and Fellow Battlefield Preservationist,

As you're no doubt aware, three years ago, the American Battlefield Trust launched "The Gaines' Mill / Cold Harbor Saved Forever Campaign." Today, I'm honored and humbled to report that, because of your tremendous generosity and that of your fellow Trust members, we have raised enough funding to preserve significant parts of the most important unprotected battlefield land in this country. I can't thank you enough!

Over the past three years, we've steadily reached and surpassed major milestones with this project, and now we are closer than ever to permanently preserving a nearly one-square-mile piece of sacred battlefield!

There is only one place in America where nearly one square mile of a "double battlefield" can still be preserved. And perhaps even more remarkable, there is only one place where nearly one square mile of hallowed ground is essentially as pristine as it was when those two battles raged in 1862 and 1864.

The overlapping ground on which both the battles of Gaines' Mill and Cold Harbor were fought is one of the most hallowed battlefields in America. And we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to save it.

Again, thanks to you, that effort is well underway. We have already made excellent progress in saving the land at "Pickett's Charge Five Times as Large" in Phase 1, "The Intersection" in Phase 2, and "The Juncture at Griffin's Woods" in Phase 3.

Before I say another word, I want you to know how grateful I am for your support. You have already made an enormous impact.

The struggle, however, rages on, and the battle is not yet won.

**And now, it's time to introduce Phase 4.**



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The battle at Gaines' Mill was part of a series of engagements known as the Seven Days Battles.

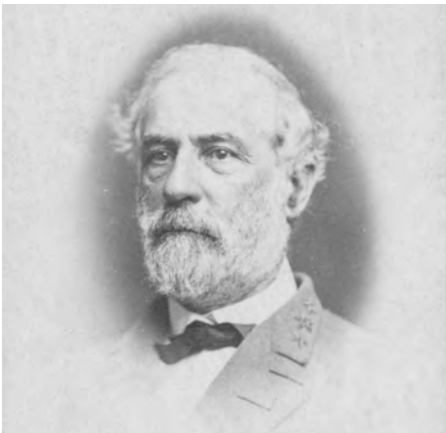
Today I ask you to continue to march alongside me as we pursue the next, absolutely crucial phase of this landmark campaign.

Shown in yellow on your enclosed battle map, the tract of land that is the primary objective of Phase 4 is, at 332 acres, THE largest tract of land in the campaign. We are calling it “The Cavalry Charge” tract, in honor of the late-day (and unusual) charge by Union cavalry against Confederate infantry.

On your map, you’ll see that this enormous tract on both the Gaines’ Mill and Cold Harbor battlefields extends from the strategically important Chickahominy River northward to connect with the Richmond National Battlefield Park, as well as the previous tracts we have worked together to save. Securing this tract would create a 3.5-mile linear swath of protected ground.

And preserving this tract today truly prevents the alarming new types of development which are running rampant in Virginia right now... utility-scale solar farms, huge (and noisy) five-to-eight story data centers, 24-hour warehouse distribution centers which span dozens or scores of acres, and new housing developments.

On June 27, 1862, newly installed General Robert E. Lee sought to strike a blow on an isolated wing of Union General George B. McClellan’s army. The resulting Confederate charge at Gaines’ Mill was the largest of the entire Civil War... yes, even larger than Pickett’s Charge at Gettysburg, or the doomed charge at Franklin.



General Robert E. Lee

© Library of Congress



The Adams House stood behind the Union lines at Gaines’ Mill. Hundreds of wounded sought relief in and around the house.

© U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center

Toward the north end of the tract is the site of the wartime Adams House. Like his brother Francis, who owned a farm near the Seven Pines battleground just a few miles away, John Adams literally had the Civil War explode upon his doorstep. In fact, because of its slightly elevated perch, the Adams House was one of the key defense points in the Union line on June 27.

After the Confederates finally broke the Union defensive line along Boatswain’s Creek, fighting not only against the Federals but also against the setting sun, forces from Union General Fitz John Porter’s Fifth Corps made a final, desperate stand that devolved into hand-to-hand fighting. The Federal troops were within a whisker of being swept from the field completely but for the 5th U.S. Cavalry’s unusual charge against Confederate infantrymen that bought them just enough time and space to get away.

Still, Gaines' Mill was Robert E. Lee's first major victory of the war, and both sides amassed approximately 15,000 casualties in just six hours of fighting, making it — at that time — the second-bloodiest battle of the War, behind Shiloh.

For the residents of Hanover County, Virginia, June 1864 must have felt like déjà vu all over again. On much of the exact same ground that witnessed the Battle of Gaines' Mill, even larger Union and Confederate forces would clash again, this time at the Battle of Cold Harbor.

As General Ulysses S. Grant moved the Army of the Potomac southward towards Richmond, his forces met with Lee's just ten miles north of the Confederate Capital at the Cold Harbor Crossroads. Here, Grant launched repeated attacks against the entrenched Confederate position, which Lee's army continually repulsed in a brutal two-week engagement that resulted in more than 17,000 casualties.



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General Ulysses S. Grant at his headquarters in Cold Harbor, Virginia.



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The Battle of Cold Harbor, Virginia, was a sprawling, two-week engagement that left more than 17,000 soldiers killed, wounded, or captured.

Grant famously wrote of the carnage, "I have always regretted that the last assault at Cold Harbor was ever made... No advantage whatever was gained to compensate for the heavy loss we sustained." Though Lee had triumphed, the battle would prove his last large-scale victory of the war as Grant turned his attention towards Petersburg.

In 1864, the land we are working to save was behind the Confederate lines where, two years before, it was behind the Union lines. And at Cold Harbor, it was Union troops under Generals Birney and Barlow attacking from the east where, two years previously, Confederate troops under Jackson and Hood had made their enormous charge from the north.

With this history in mind, I hope you'll agree: Of the 57,000 acres you have helped to save all across America, these are among the most important.

I'm reminded of the comment made many years ago by the late, great, incomparable historian Ed Bearss, who told us that if this property ever came onto the market, we should sell off every other piece of battlefield land this organization had ever saved to pay for it: It is THAT important!

Of course, we would never do that! But the fact is that we do still have to raise a significant amount of money before this land can be considered truly preserved.

Now, if possible, this current effort gets even a little bit better. For the first time EVER, we have a chance to preserve land at the Battle of Seven Pines, also known as Fair Oaks. Twelve acres might not seem like much, but like all battlefield preservation efforts, we must start somewhere, and no battlefield is more deserving and in more desperate need of preservation.

Rewinding our story to May of 1862, General McClellan was this close to taking the capital of the Confederacy. Commanding the Union's largest army to date, he had amassed a force of 105,000 and was a mere eight miles outside of Richmond. Union soldiers said they could hear the beleaguered city's church bells.

Could McClellan have ended the war in its early years by capturing the Confederate capital? Your guess is as good as mine, but the question is purely academic, as we all know, because he never got the chance.

On May 31, Confederate forces lashed out at McClellan's army in what we now know as the Battle of Seven Pines. A total of approximately 73,000 forces engaged for the next two days, with each side suffering extensive casualties: 5,739 for the North, and 7,997 for the South.

By the time the smoke had cleared, each side claimed victory, though neither side had really achieved it. But arguably more consequential than a tactical or strategic win for either side was an event that would change the course of the entire war...

During the battle, General Joseph E. Johnston was wounded, and Confederate president Jefferson Davis would tap his senior military advisor Robert E. Lee to become the new commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. Lee wasted no time in making his mark, and within a month had driven McClellan back down the Virginia peninsula, saving the capital of the Confederacy.

With the promotion of Lee, the Battle of Seven Pines turned out to be a major pivot point in the war.

But Seven Pines also serves as a cautionary tale about what can happen when we fail to preserve a battlefield. Despite the battle's significance in the trajectory of the war, the battlefield was all but lost to commercial and residential development many years ago. Only a handful of historical markers trace the progression of the battle along modern U.S. Route 60 and Virginia Route 33.

Back in the 1920s, a small airfield was built on the site of the battlefield, perhaps when many of the "old soldiers" had faded away, and a new generation was looking to "move on." In the '60s and '70s, however, that "small airfield" expanded to become today's Richmond International Airport, driving more development all around it, and so much of the Seven Pines / Fair Oaks battlefield is now, sadly, gone forever.



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Wood engraving titled 'After the Battle of Seven Pines — putting the wounded on cars.'

That's why the small 12-acre tract we have the chance to save there now is so important. Quite candidly, it's like the tiny 4-acre parcel of the Chantilly / Ox Hill battlefield (where the modern battlefield preservation movement began) that survives as a small, heartbreaking battlefield park.

These 12 acres at Seven Pines not only give us the chance, for the first time, to tell the story of the battle that happened there. Just as important, it will remind future visitors that preservation of our nation's history — specifically of its hallowed battlefields — does not just “happen” on its own. It takes dedicated people who care about our history... it takes committed people willing to take action... and unfortunately, some things never change: It takes money to buy these hallowed grounds from willing sellers to ensure that they will be preserved forever.

The total transaction value for the combined 344 acres we can save at Gaines' Mill and Seven Pines is \$1.085 million — certainly a very significant sum. Fortunately, we've already received a few significant gifts from some very generous major donors and expect to receive state and federal grants. But even with those generous gifts and grants, we will still have to raise \$506,047.

In these times, believe me, I fully understand what I am asking... a half-a-million dollars is a huge task. But I hope you feel as I do, that we can't let this opportunity slip through our hands.

Our entire Gaines' Mill / Cold Harbor Saved Forever Campaign has been a huge challenge. I can tell you this effort is one of the largest we have ever taken on in more than 30 years of saving hallowed ground, and it will rank among the most expensive this organization has ever faced.

As you'll likely recall, due to an unprecedented level of confidentiality requested by the landowner, I am unfortunately not at liberty to divulge publicly the exact price we are paying.

But I can tell you we have about two years left to raise all the funds we need to complete the Campaign. We are obligated to make timely payments each year or risk defaulting on our agreement.

You may be wondering, is it worth it?

I'll let noted historian Robert K. Krick answer that question:

*“No unpreserved battlefield property in North America resonates with higher historical value than this land. Its critical location on the Gaines' Mill battlefield might be matched by some other sites, so might its importance for Cold Harbor be matched. No single property anywhere, though, ranks so powerfully significant for each of two distinct battles. In fact, I think it is safe to say that it rates higher than any of the tremendous preservation coups we have achieved to date. It stands alone.”*

Mr. Krick also has this to say about Seven Pines:

*“Without the inspiration offered by reading, Civil War enthusiasts who shape their trips around touring battlefields typically concentrate on places they know about, or ones*



© Derek Ralston | American Battlefield Trust

Gaines' Mill was Robert E. Lee's first major victory of the Civil War.

*where the original ground survives for inspection. Demolished or compromised sites of course make less desirable destinations. The Seven Pines/Fair Oaks battlefield just east of Richmond illustrates those points, emphatically. The wretched state of preservation there has stifled enthusiasm on all fronts: research, writing, and visiting. The size and significance of the battle makes the example stand out ... Few battles of comparable size have attracted less attention across the decades ... As of this writing, visitors to Seven Pines/Fair Oaks will find not a single publicly preserved acre of battlefield landscape.”*

That is, until now... and only if you will help!

Like McClellan in 1862, we are *this* close.

Do we successfully complete Phase 4 of this critical campaign, or do we surrender to the kind of “progress” that has permanently marred most of the battlefield of Seven Pines and threatened so many other battlefields? I think we all know the answer.

We have this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to permanently preserve the more than 332 acres at Gaines’ Mill and Cold Harbor that I’ve described for you in this letter. The tract is impressive in both size and historical significance. Plus, we have the opportunity to save the first 12 acres ever at Seven Pines!

Because of the generosity of a few generous donors plus anticipated federal and state matching grants, every dollar you can send today will be more than doubled. With a \$2.14-to-\$1 match, your gift goes that much further to help us reach our goal and raise \$506,047.

As a fellow dedicated preservationist, I am, once again, counting on you and your generosity to help ensure that future generations of Americans can walk this hallowed ground, and learn the hard-won lessons of those who fought and died there.

Thank you so much for your time. I am both proud and humbled by how you have consistently answered the call to save our country’s history, and I again thank you for considering making a major contribution to the cause of historic battlefield preservation.



With warmest regards,

*David N. Duncan*

David N. Duncan  
President

P.S. If this letter has made you eager for more detailed information regarding the battles of Gaines’ Mill, Cold Harbor, and Seven Pines, I strongly encourage you to visit the American Battlefield Trust website, where you can find dozens of additional maps, scores of modern and historic photos and, literally, thousands of articles on these and hundreds of other battles. While there, you can also make your donation quickly and securely, putting your generous support to work at the speed of light. Visit [battlefields.org/GMCH2023](http://battlefields.org/GMCH2023) today, and please know how grateful I am to you for your continued support of our great cause!