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KELLY’S FORD | RAPPAHANNOCK STATION

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SUMMER 2024 • Vol. 25 No. 2

AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST

HALLOWED GROUND

WELCOME TO
CULPEPER
BATTLEFIELDS
STATE PARK

CEDAR MOUNTAIN | BRANDY STATION
KELLY’S FORD | RAPPAHANNOCK STATION
THE AMERICAN Battlefield Trust, we are fond of saying that we are in “the forever business,” meaning that once we have preserved a battlefield, it will remain in that state — undeveloped and ready to teach those eager to learn our history — for as long as our country exists. This is entirely true, but in some cases, it might be more correct to say that we battlefield preservationists play the long game. This summer, in Culpeper County, Virginia, we celebrate the culmination of one of those situations: the grand opening of the Culpeper Battlefields State Park.

Quite literally, this is a success story that spans generations. It began when this organization was practically a twinkle in the eye of some visionary historians. A handful of meetings might have been held for the fledgling Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, but even in those founders’ wildest dreams, they couldn’t have imagined the situation I find myself in today: president of a truly national organization writing a letter to you, president of a truly national organization, who are reading these words.

And, of course, this doesn’t even touch on the work we’ve done at Cedar Mountain, Kelly’s Ford and Rappahannock Station, much of which will also become a part of the new Culpeper Battlefields State Park. These places, too, are forever changed by our work, by your generosity. And over the next several years, the Trust will work to facilitate a seamless transition for these hallowed grounds, without any interruption in access and a steady stream of new recreational amenities. I urge you to make plans to visit Culpeper Battlefields State Park as these improvements come online. Enjoy exploring the park you made possible and visiting the surrounding communities that embrace and support it.

This victory is yours, and even if you were far from the celebration and park dedication on June 8 — incidentally, just one day before the battle’s 161st anniversary — please know that we felt your presence and impact on the most foundational level.

David N. Duncan
President, American Battlefield Trust
American Battlefield Trust

HALLOWED GROUND SUMMER 2024

The Wilderness, Fredericksburg, Va.

The Wilderness Battlefield

Two battlefields named among America’s Most Endangered Historic Sites

NTHP returns the Wilderness and Minute Man National Historical Park to the list

In assembling its annual list of the country’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) made the bold choice to re-list both the Wilderness Battlefield and Minute Man National Historical Park and their environs, a stark indication of the urgent and ongoing need to protect even our most hallowed grounds from the relentless forces of development and expansion.

“I will not say it is an ‘honor’ to see two pivotal battlefields on a list of critically imperiled sites,” said American Battlefield Trust President David Duncan, “but it is warranted, and it is well-merited. Next year we will mark 250 years since the beginning of the American Revolution, when our Patriot forebears took a principled stand in the face of a formidable foe. Today, safeguarding our battlefields so that future generations will understand what was risked on their behalf require fierce advocates no less steadfast in their convictions.”

The Wilderness, a pivotal May 1864 battle and turning point in the Civil War, is a unit of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. It is one of the most storied battlefields in the nation and is home to the American Revolution’s only major land battle. It was fought on the same day as the Battle of New Market Heights to Chaffin’s Bluff. After Fort Harrison was captured, Union troops set their sights on Fort Gregg, attacking it later that same day. Part of the 8th and 9th U.S. Colored Troops advanced it, but made little progress, most likely pinned down on the crucial seventh acre of the park that is the Trust’s purchased acres. Union troops set their sights on Fort Gregg, attacking it later that same day. Part of the 8th and 9th U.S. Colored Troops advanced it, but made little progress, most likely pinned down on the crucial seventh acre of the park that is the Trust’s purchased acres. Fort Gregg remained heavily defended by Confederate artillery and infantry until Richmond fell in early April 1865. This move was especially important because for many years the park controlled a portion of Fort Gregg’s remains, but the adjacent remaining site was still vulnerable; finally, ownership of the important cultural resource is unified.

Also known as Danby’s Mill, Armstrong’s Mill, Rowan Creek, and Vaughan Road, the Battle of Hatcher’s Run was fought February 5–7, 1865, and was one in a series of Union offensives during the siege of Petersburg aimed at cutting off Confederate supply traffic on the Long Bridge and the Weldon Railroad west of Petersburg, Virginia. This 52-acre property, which commemorates the first engagements of the American Revolution in April 1775. The area is also rich with other historic sites, like Walden Pond and Orchard House, the home of Louisa May Alcott where she wrote and set her novel Little Women.

According to the NTHP announcement, a theme connecting the 2024 list is the power of communities to come together on behalf of their cultural landmarks. “By rallying around the places that matter most to them, communities are not only empowered by their unique pasts, but also safeguarding a sense of identity, community, and vitality for the future.” This is certainly the case for both battlefields, which have had community-supported coalitions advocating against pressing threats for many years.

It is exceedingly rare for a single organization to be engaged in direct advocacy on behalf of multiple sites on the national 11 Most list, as the Trust is doing. Full details on both threats, as well as speak out opportunities are available on the Trust website at www.battlefields.org/11Most.

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HALLowed Ground SUMMER 2024

American Battlefield Trust

www.battlefields.org AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST

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RETURN TO GETTYSBURG
2024 Annual Conference draws a crowd, highlights Trust impact across the battlefield

FROM the TRENCHES
BREAKING PRESERVATION NEWS

ATTENDS at the American Battlefield Trust’s 2024 Annual Conference in April were able to view and celebrate ongoing work at a number of high-profile sites. “I always love coming to Gettysburg,” said one guest, “but seeing the battlefield through the lens of how my contributions have made a direct impact on the landscape and on what visitors can explore was incredibly rewarding.”

Along the Baltimore Pike, near McAllister’s Mill, members took in the completed restoration of a one-time mini golf course sold to the Trust by its preservation-minded longtime owners when they chose to retire. Site plans were finalized in consultation with the National Park Service to blend with the transition into the park and streamline an anticipated future transfer of ownership.

Closer toward the town center on the same approach, guests took in the recent acquisition of land on East Cemetery Hill near Stevens Knoll. Here, the Trust has completed the purchase of property including the Battlefield Military Museum, another business whose owner looked to the Trust when ready to evolve, and the historic McKnight House. Per the terms of its acquisition agreement with the nearby Seminary Ridge Museum, the Trust has now completed its purchase. Although only a half-acre, the site has layered history that extends far beyond July 3, 1863; during World War I it was the headquarters of Camp Colt, where American troops trained in tank warfare under a young Dwight David Eisenhower, and it later became a prisoner of war camp for captured German soldiers during World War II.

Even as the Trust looks toward interpretive plans for newly preserved sites, crafting them in conjunction with relevant local authorities, it continues to upgrade the visitor experience at other properties around Gettysburg. Conference guests were treated to a freshly upgraded exhibit space at Lee’s Headquarters. Thanks to a collaborative agreement with the nearby Seminary Ridge Museum, the house will welcome guests on summer Fridays and select Saturdays, while the grounds are open daily. Additional stewardship work is ongoing at the nearby James Thompson House.

HISTORICAL FIELD TRIP GRANT PROGRAM
crests 50,000 students served

HEN TEACHER Erin Gilbert and her colleagues at White Oaks Elementary School in Fairfax County, Va., set a syllabus and planned their year, they were excited by the prospective return of a once-beloved sixth-grade field trip that had been sidelined since COVID. They had no idea that their application to American Battlefield Trust’s History Field Trip Grant Program, which helps fund student trips to historic sites, would ultimately fuel that initiative past a remarkable milestone: 50,000 children served.

“We saw hallowed ground so that this and future generations can use it to learn essential lessons of American history at the places where it unfolded,” said Trust President David Duncan. It makes a lifelong impression when school kids can visit historic sites in person, have an immersive experience and walk away with a deeper understanding of the past and how it remains relevant.”

BORN out of a keen understanding of the power of place and a belief that all American school children is commendable and I’m thrilled that history-loving students from the 11th District were the ones that pushed this worthwhile program over its impressive milestone.”

Gilbert, chaperones, and some 115 sixth graders boarded buses early April 18 for the trip to Petersburg, Va., where they explored the 424-acre Pamplin Historical Park. The students were able to soak in the full measure of the park’s fascinating heritage. They felt and heard the experience of battle in the park’s award-winning interpretive center and got a sense of how the Civil War, the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, in alignment with the Trust’s mission. Grants range from $250 to $3,000, toward transportation costs, admission fees and reasonable fees for presenters and guides. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis but must be received one month before the proposed visit. Funding is dispersed after the trip and upon receipt of the required forms and receipts. Full details and application materials are available at www.battlefields.org/fieldtrips.

 Soldiers. They walked in the footsteps of the soldiers and saw the actual entrenchments they built during the Siege of Petersburg. “We were thrilled to go back to Pamplin Park, a site that is always a huge hit with students because they get a powerful sense of connection with what ordinary people in the past went through,” said Gilbert. “The Trust’s History Field Trip Grant Program helped make our journey more affordable and can help put memorable trips within reach for other schools, too.”

The History Field Trip Grant Program allows K-12 educators to apply for funding to offset the cost of day-trip field trips to battlefields, museums and other historic sites related to the Civil War, the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, in alignment with the Trust’s mission. Grants range from $250 to $3,000, toward transportation costs, admission fees and reasonable fees for presenters and guides. Application materials are available at www.battlefields.org/fieldtrips.
BREAKING PRESERVATION NEWS
YOUTH LEADERSHIP TEAM CONTINUES TO IMPRESS

Innovative capstone projects take center stage

The American Battlefield Trust extends its most sincere thanks to the more than 3,000 volunteers who turned out to make our 28th Annual Park Day a smashing success! One of our longest running and most successful programs, this nationwide effort clearly demonstrates how invested communities remain in their own unique historic resources. Since its inception, some 110,000 people have cumulatively spent 475,000 hours volunteering to clean up and improve battlefields and other historic sites. Each site that chooses to participate creates a custom project based on its specific needs, under the umbrella of the larger effort.

In 2024, we had our most diverse crop of participating sites yet, representing conflicts from the French and Indian War through World War II — a span of 181 years of American military history! Geographically, our volunteers were out in force at 108 locations stretching from New England — at the Revolutionary War Butts Hill Fort in Portsmouth, R.I. — to the South Pacific — with our friends at War in the Pacific National Historical Park in Guam. The Trust is constantly looking for ways to grow and evolve this beloved program to meet the needs of participating sites, which now include a broader array of battlefields, forts, museums, period homes, historic cemeteries and other relevant places than ever before. We look forward to debuting new innovations in 2025 to help more sites participate and encourage even greater volunteer engagement.

HE FUTURE OF HISTORY is bright indeed, thanks to the passion of young people like those who participate in the American Battlefield Trust’s Youth Leadership Team. The high-schoolers selected for each annual cohort consistently demonstrate to Trust members and the world at large that protected historic landscapes will be in good hands long into the future through the efforts of passionate and preservation-minded individuals who will carry on the legacy of our work.

Eight members of the 2023-24 class attended the Trust’s Annual Conference in April, enjoying tours and having the opportunity to present on their community capstone projects to other attendees.

“It was exciting to meet and connect with similar history-minded people who want to share and ignite people’s passion for our history while raising awareness for the importance of preserving historic sites,” said Yujin Wu from New York. Wu introduced her capstone project, in which she interviewshistory and civic-minded individuals for her capstone project, in which she interviews historians and local historic organizations and creates a documentary showcasing hallowed ground in New York City.

“Being part of this group allowed me to prepare for graduation, six YLTers came to Washington to participate in our Youth Lobby Day, meeting with legislators to advocate for historic preservation funding and support. Participants met with legislators’ staff and in some cases directly with a Senator and Representative including Pradyumn Bonu who met with Rep. Bradley Scott Schneider from Illinois to personally thank him for his continuous support for historic preservation.

Members of the 2023-24 Youth Leadership Team include: Pradyumn Maurya Bonu (Buffalo Grove, Ill.), Alexander Chayrigues (Concord, Mass.), Daniel Ginasson (West Suffield, Conn.), Isabella Hernandez (Eastvale, Calif.), Nathan Mercer (Monac, Ga.), Wynton Nama (The Woodlands, Texas), Tanisha Parikh (Katy, Texas), Liu Philips (Scottsdale, Ariz.), Leo Takikonda (Rhinebeck, N.Y.), and Yujin Wu (Flushing, N.Y.). Applications for the 2024-25 class opened in May, with full details available at www.battlefields.org/ylt.

Meanwhile, YLT alumni continue to excel in passion projects within the history field. Still in high school in Stonington, Connecticut, Jacob Bates, is getting ready for his first album to drop. In addition to planning a living history event at nearby Fort Trumbull during his YLT term last school year, an offshoot of his reenacting in the 8th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry, Jacob has also formed a Civil War-era banjo. The Nutmeggers, with two other students. He plays the banjo while classmates accompany on fiddle and guitar.

Jacob even built his period-appropriate tackhead banjo by hand. The instrument is fretless, with a long neck and catgut strings. Built almost like a drum, Jacob says, “The skin is from actual animal skin, so it needs to settle. Then you wet it and stretch it out, tucking it in place in a clockwise-type pattern.” Once it’s released this summer, information on how to listen to The Nutmeggers’ ‘In High Water: Songs of the Civil War’ will be available on the Trust website. We’ll also share Jacob’s extensively re-searched liner notes, which include the history of the tune and details on known performances and references to the song, as well as sheet music.

In 2024, the Trust had our most diverse crop of participating sites HALLLOWED GROUND SUMMER 2024 www.battlefields.org AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST
EIGHT MILITARY CAMPAIGNS were inaugurated within Culpeper County during the Civil War, more than in any other county in the nation. Geographically situated midway between the warring capitals and connected to the North by the colonial-era Carolina Road, as well as the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, Culpeper’s vital strategic position ensconced south of the Rappahannock River ensured the county would attract the focus of opposing military planners.

Some 160 years later, the Brandy Station Battlefield has been the focus of innovative interpretation efforts designed to help visitors at home and learners across the globe envision what the battlefield was like in June 1863. A Trust-produced virtual tour lets users explore the battlefield in 3D — an experience made even more dramatic and immersive by the use of virtual reality goggles! Three distinct vistas — Fleetwood Hill, St. James Church and Buford’s Knoll — are rendered in layers of history that unfolded on the site.

Through the modern magic of augmented reality, two fascinating structures no longer extant on the landscape can also be brought to life, either while in the field or in your backyard. A visit to the one-mile walking trail around the former site of St. James Church can be greatly enhanced by using a smartphone to superimpose the structure back on the modern landscape. The area was the scene of fierce fighting during the battle’s early stages and seized by Union troopers when Confederates in the area redeployed to Fleetwood Hill. Six months later, Union soldiers dismantled the small brick church and used the materials to construct their winter quarters.

To enrich the experience at Fleetwood Hill, the Trust has digitally reconstructed a slave cabin similar to those that would have been found on the slopes. Fleetwood, the plantation that gave the hill its name, was built by a Revolutionary War gun manufacturer, and was occupied by a tenant during the battle and heavily damaged by fighting. Nationally, fewer than 300 examples of slave cabins from the 19th century remain, limiting interpretive opportunities. The ability to place a digital version on the landscape as one explores the walking trail emphasizes the layers of history that unfolded on the site.

Those desiring a guided tour of the battlefield but who are unable to secure a historian to accompany them should consider downloading the Trust’s GPS-enabled Brandy Station Battle App™ guide. Featuring 15 tour stops with explanatory text, audio and video content, plus an additional 14 points of interest and other onboard resources, the app is indispensable for those looking to explore the battlefield with confidence.

YOUR GUIDE TO VIRGINIA’S 43RD STATE PARK
Collaboration between Trust and Commonwealth helps shape site’s future

ALTHOUGH the American Battlefield Trust has been protecting hallowed ground, then interpreting it with trails and signs — plus augmenting the preserved acreage at existing federal, state and local facilities — for nearly 40 years, it isn’t often that we are party to the creation of a new state park from the ground up! But that’s exactly what will happen, through cooperation with the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Department of Conservation and Recreation and Department of Historic Resources this summer: the dedication of the 43rd Virginia state park.

Culpeper Battlefields State Park’s official dedication by Gov. Glenn Youngkin on June 8, 2024, is the culmination of a decades-long preservation effort chronicled elsewhere in this issue. Particularly in the past two years, since legislation for the park was signed into law, Trust staff have worked closely with state officials on the complex logistics that will initially allow the donation of more than 2,000 acres of battlefield land from the Trust and the Brandy Station Foundation to the Commonwealth.

About 260 acres centered around the crest of Fleetwood Hill were first donated to the state, with additional transfers happening in gradual phases through 2027. A master management agreement is being created for the Trust and the Commonwealth to cooperatively handle stewardship and care of the grounds over the next several years during the transfer process and as the park builds staffing and operations infrastructure. Many existing agricultural leases will continue uninterrupted and Trust-installed signage will be retained.

Although the majority of the new park’s acreage is located at the Brandy Station and Cedar Mountain battlefields, future transfers may include parts of Kelly’s Ford and Rappahannock Station, which, in addition to opportunities for historical interpretation, would facilitate recreational access to the Rappahannock River. The park may also grow to include notable archaeological resources, thanks to the inclusion of land on Hansborough’s Ridge near Stevensburg that contains the well-preserved remnants of a Union winter encampment. As these additional properties are fully under state management, Virginia’s master plan process for the park will commence to determine what additional park amenities and programming will be offered.

Nor is the Trust retiring from the business of protecting battlefield land in Culpeper County — far from it, in fact. The legislation that formally authorized the park’s creation further appropriated a total of $5.5 million for the purchase of additional lands that will enhance the park, especially those that connect previously preserved holdings. We continue to explore opportunities for such land acquisition projects.
In 2009 and 2010, two landowners donated conservation easements on their land to the Commonwealth of Virginia, ensuring the preservation of 782 acres. These easements permanently prevented any kind of development on two tracts, including a large section of the battlefield north of Fleetwood Hill. One of these tracts included the stone wall that Rooney Lee’s Confederate troopers used in their defense against Buford’s men. Preserving this land not only prevented the destruction of this hallowed ground, but also connected two major pieces of the battlefield.

But the crest of Fleetwood Hill — called by historian Clark B. “Bud” Hall the “most fought-upon, marched-upon, and camped-upon piece of ground in American history,” was still in private hands, crowned by a large modern house. Thankfully, after negotiations, the landowner was willing to sell to the Trust and, in 2013, the organization embarked on a $3.6 million fundraising campaign to purchase and restore this hallowed ground.

Creation of the park in the heart of the bucolic Virginia Piedmont was approved by the Virginia General Assembly and signed into law by Gov. Youngkin as part of the Commonwealth’s two-year budget plan in June 2022, after seven years of behind-the-scenes discussions. In addition to clearing the way for the Trust and Brandy Station Foundation to donate land outright to the state, the budget also appropriated a further $3 million for the Trust to acquire 800 more acres of historic land that will augment the overall experience for park visitors.

The first big threat to Culpeper County’s battlefields came in the early 1990s, when 1,500 acres at Brandy Station were rezoned for commercial development. The racetrack proposal demonstrated the vulnerability of the battlefield to development, spurring APCWS to acquire in 1997 a 571-acre tract on the northern part of the battlefield around Buford’s Knoll. The vulnerability of this crucial battlefield demonstrated, land acquisition efforts began in earnest and in 1997, APCWS purchased a 571-acre tract in the northern part of the battlefield around Buford’s Knoll.

While the Battle of Brandy Station raged across thousands of acres of the Virginia countryside, the key to the battlefield was Fleetwood Hill. This was the site of General J.E.B. Stuart’s headquarters. Thousands of troopers engaged in fierce combat at close quarters in an attempt to claim this crucial strategic position. In 2008, the Civil War Trust took its first steps toward preserving this land, acquiring not one, but two crucial tracts on both sides of the hill. For the first time in 150 years, the land where Stuart’s cavalry faced off against General David Gregg’s Union troopers for control of the Virginia countryside had been at least partially preserved. But there was much more work to be done.

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Playing a major role in the entire process has been Virginia State Senator Bryce Reeves, who has long pushed for a state park such as this in Culpeper County. He worked diligently with Gov. Youngkin to get state park approval included in the state’s 2022 biennial budget. “I look forward to the day when Virginians and visitors from throughout the country can learn about our nation’s history by visiting these hallowed grounds,” Reeves told the Friends of Culpeper Battlefields blog.

Through Hallowed Ground, and the Brandy Station Foundation, as well as donors who contributed funds above and beyond the purchase price, we can … watch the years roll away and reveal the 19th-century landscape.”

“At the American Battlefield Trust, we are fond of saying that ‘we build parks and tell stories,’ some of the greatest stories in American history. In this instance, we mean it especially literally — the creation of this new state park is the culmination of hard work across long years,” says Trust President David Duncan. “First, the preservation of this land, both safeguarding it from threats of inappropriate development and then its outright purchase. But also, significant effort to demonstrate that this new park will be a meaningful addition to Virginia’s landscape in terms of recreation opportunities and economic potential via heritage tourism.”

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The Civil War escalated during the spring and summer of 1862, both armies made adjustments in leadership, organization and policies. The August 9, 1862, Battle of Cedar Mountain was impacted by modifications made during the weeks prior to the fight and, in turn, influenced further evolutions, especially in leadership of the Army of Northern Virginia.

The first five months of 1862 saw Union triumphs across the map, with Federal victories recorded in Battles at Mill Springs, Ky., Pea Ridge, Ark., and Glorieta Pass, N.M. In Tennessee, Brig. Gen. Ulysses Grant secured the unconditional surrender of Forts Henry and Donelson and pounded the Confederates at Shiloh, the bloodiest battle of the war, to date. New Orleans and Fort Pulaski fell to the Union navy, among other inroads along the coast.

A bright spot for the Confederates was the spring’s Shenandoah Valley Campaign, in which Maj. Gen. Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson’s swift-moving 17,000-man army had achieved a series of small but impressive victories and startled some Federal authorities. Jackson then took his troops to Richmond to join the Army of Northern Virginia, newly commanded by Gen. Robert E. Lee. In the Seven Days’ Battles in late June and early July 1862, the massive Federal army nearly on the doorstep of the Confederate capital in Richmond had been repelled.

Lincoln, conversely, was astonished that the Federal success of early 1862 had been seemingly erased in the span of a week. He questioned how long the federal government should...
continue to offer the seceded states the opportunity to rejoin the Union with slavery intact, and he contemplated an emancipation proclamation and harsh consequences for Southern citizens who refused to take an oath of allegiance to the United States. To implement such a change in federal policy, Lincoln needed a politically sympathetic army commander and looked to fellow Republican Maj. Gen. John Pope. The President also took the opportunity to address the lack of coordination and cooperation that had created room for Jackson to maneuver so successfully in the Valley. The three former departments totaling 50,000 Federal troops he had so stymied in piece-meal fashion each became a corps in Pope’s new Federal Army of Virginia.

Pope’s proclamations were largely met with moral outrage, and the difficulty of protecting Confederate citizens from Pope’s army and its harsh policies toward civilians would not prevent Lee from trying. He turned to Jackson with the admonition, “I want Pope to be suppressed.”

But Lee was also obviously aware of some deficiencies in Jackson’s leadership style, and he questioned Jackson’s ability to command a larger number of troops than he had directed in the Shenandoah Valley. For example, Lee knew that Jackson chose to share little of his plans with his subordinates. So, reinforcements sent to Jackson prior to the Battle of Cedar Mountain came with some advice: “[B]ly advising your division commanders … much trouble can be saved you … as they can act more intelligently.”

The battle in the shadow of Cedar Mountain demonstrated Jackson would heed Lee’s sound counsel. On August 9, 1862, Jackson decided to strike one of Pope’s three isolated corps under Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks before the Federal army consolidated. During a brutal hot day that likely hit the century mark, Jackson first engaged Banks in an artillery duel as the Southerner’s infantry formed for an assault.

Although outnumbered nearly 2-to-1, the Union army received something of an assist from Brig. Gen. Charles Winder, who commanded one of Jackson’s three divisions. Whether because Winder was sick and perhaps not himself on the day of battle, or because the former artilleryman settled into what he was most comfortable doing by giving an inordinate amount of attention to his cannoniers, or perhaps being over-confident in the numerical superiority of the Confederate force, Winder did not attend to the proper alignment of his infantry on the Confederate left. Winder had ordered a brigade commanded by Col. Thomas S. Garnett to attack the right end of the Federal artillery line, clearly visible across farm fields. But Garnett discovered what turned out to be a division of Federal infantry in position in woods protecting that end of the row of cannon, and asked Winder for further instructions. Garnett recalled being told by Winder “to remain where I was for a few moments.” Before Winder could investigate, a shell fragment sliced his abdomen and nearly tore off his arm.

Brig. Gen. William B. Taliaferro, replacing the mortally wounded Winder as division commander, undertook his own reconnaissance and discovered just how vulnerable Garnett’s alignment was. But before Taliaferro could make any adjustments and undertake the initiative, Banks attacked, causing chaos among the poorly positioned Confederate left. Garnett’s line collapsed and Jackson responded by riding to the point of danger to rally his troops. While attempting to draw his saber, he reportedly found it rusted in his scabbard from non-use, so he unhooks it and used his sheathed sword to stop the rout, calling out, “Rally, brave men, and press forward! Your general will lead you. Jackson will lead you. Follow me!”

With the timely arrival of reinforce-ments, a Confederate counterattack brought their superior numbers to bear and turned a near-defeat into victory. Federal reinforcements were too late, too late, and the Federal brigade under Brig. Gen. Samuel Crawford that had done most of the damage to Jackson’s forces ran out of steam and had to give way. Federal casualties were 2,381, while Confederate losses numbered 1,276.

Though Jackson did not follow Lee’s advice, and it can be argued that the army suffered from his subordinates lacking adequate information about the march and the battle plan, Jackson was victorious and was on the road to commanding half the Confederate army—some 35,000 troops. Federal officers captured during the battle “were not entitled to the privileges of ordinary prisoners of war,” and if Pope executed any Confederate civilians in accordance with his proclamations, these officers would be executed in retaliation. In the end, Pope’s army would not be the force to carry out the hard hand of war. The federal government eventually declared Pope’s proclamations be rescinded. Pope himself removed from the Civil War and assigned service fighting Native Americans in the Dakotas, and his former army merged into the Army of the Potomac.

Greg Mertz retired as supervisory historian at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park in 2021, after a nearly 40-year career in the National Park Service. A frequent contributor to many history publications, he is the founding president of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, former vice president of the Brandy Station Foundation and an active and in-demand tour guide.
On the rolling hills of Culpeper County, nearly 20,000 skilled horsemen from the north and south charged each other in a bloody face off to the death.

THE BATTLE of BRANDY STATION

by DANIEL J. BEATTIE, PH.D.

photo by ANDY ANDERSON
As commander of the Army of the Potomac, Hooker had, in fact, re-formed his cavalry in the early spring of 1863. He ordered the horsemen in his command concentrated into a cavalry corps, the better to perform the traditional cavalry tasks of screening their own army and reconnoitering to find out what the enemy army was doing. For two years, under the able J.E.B. Stuart, the Confederate cavalry had performed these responsibilities superbly, often at the expense of the Federal horsemen.

In early June 1863, Hooker ordered his cavalry corps commander, Alfred Pleasonton, to take most of the Union cavalry up the Rappahannock River from Fredericksburg to Culpeper County. Hooker had learned the Confederate cavalry — and possibly some of Lee’s infantry — were massing in that region of plentiful forage and strategic opportunities. Either Stuart meant another large-scale cavalry raid, or he was the vanguard of another thrust by Lee at Washington, D.C., or on other Northern soil. Hooker instructed Pleasonton “to disperse and destroy” Lee’s mounted arm.

War had visited Culpeper’s woods and rolling fields several times in the preceding two years. Armies had marched through it, camped there, sparred with each other there and fought there in the battle of Cedar Mountain in 1862. Dismantled fences, missing livestock, ruined roads, embittered civilians and the graves of local boys were the price Culpeper had paid so far in the bitter conflict. In early June 1863, war came calling again.

The Confederate cavalry was ready for war that spring. In late May and early June, Stuart staged several magnificent cavalry reviews in Culpeper. Never before were Lee’s horsemen so numerous, so confident, so ready. Lee indeed meant to carry war across the Potomac. Stuart’s 9,700 troopers would lead an advance across the Rappahannock and mask the army’s approach to the Potomac. Stuart was set to cross the Rappahannock early on June 9, the day after the last grand review, at Beverly’s Ford.

Another great cavalry force also planned a crossing at Beverly’s Ford that morning. A column of 4,500 cavalry and 1,500 infantry, wearing Union blue and towing 16 cannons, arrived at the Rappahannock first. This imposing force crossed without much opposition and gave J.E.B. Stuart his first great shock of the day. Alfred Pleasonton was also surprised. He had expected to find Stuart’s men near Culpeper Court House, 10 miles from the river. The Federal commander had divided his force in two. Another Union column, about the same size as the wing at Beverly’s Ford, was supposed to cross the Rappahannock at Kelly’s Ford eight miles downstream, at
THE BATTLE CAME DOWN TO A STRUGGLE FOR FLEETWOOD HILL, A CONTEST THAT CONSUMED THE AFTERNOON... THE HILLTOP CHANGED HANDS SEVERAL TIMES. THE BATTLE DEVOLVED INTO A GIANT, SWIRLING MELEE.

Buford left four cavalry and two infantry regiments to hold against Confederate attacks and guard the vital ford. He then took his remaining men northward to work his way around the Confederate left flank. On the Cunningham and Green Farms, Buford was opposed by Rooney Lee’s brigade. In vigorous mounted and dismounted fighting, Buford gradually forced Lee back to Yew Ridge and northern Fleetwood Hill. Stuart, however, was now pressing the line Buford had left in front of St. James Church. Both sides anxiously awaited reinforcements. Stuart needed Thomp-son’s brigade as Munford’s and the 6th Pennsylvania troops who attacked the Confederate artillery was also supported — by nearly 5,000 mounted and dismounted cavalry. The gallant charge shattered on the defenders’ line.

Understanding the strength of the Confederates at St. James Church, Buford took his command. It took him nearly two hours, all his men over the river by 9:00 a.m., to reach St. James. He was unaware at first of the low ridge near a little brick church dedicated to St. James. He was unaware at first of the Confederate artillery that was now pressing the line. Buford gradually forced Lee back to Yew Ridge and northern Fleetwood Hill. Stuart, however, was now pressing the line Buford had left in front of St. James Church. Buford then took his remaining men northward to work his way around the Confederate left flank. On the Cunningham and Green Farms, Buford was opposed by Rooney Lee’s brigade. In vigorous mounted and dismounted fighting, Buford gradually forced Lee back to Yew Ridge and northern Fleetwood Hill. Stuart, however, was now pressing the line Buford had left in front of St. James Church. 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Lee’s note — left for Averell after he conducted a daring raid north of the Rappahannock River in February of 1863 — was not without merit. Since the outbreak of the war in 1861, Confederate horsemen had routinely routed Union cavalry. At the sight of their horsemen on the roads, Northern soldiers would famously shout, “There’s going to be a fight! The cavalry’s coming back!”

That began to change on January 25, 1863, when Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker assumed command of the Army of the Potomac. Hooker transformed scattered mounted brigades into a formal Cavalry Corps, and by March of 1863, what the newly organized Union Cavalry Corps lacked in confidence, experience and leadership, they made up for in superior equipment and numbers, outnumbering their Confederate cohorts in both men and horses.

Averell, goaded by Lee’s barb, requested to cross the river to “rouse or destroy” Fitzhugh Lee and his command as they sheltered south of the river near Culpepper Courthouse in Virginia. After Hooker granted his request, Averell took his force of 2,100 Union cavalrymen at daybreak on March 17 and crossed the Rappahannock at a low passage in the river dubbed Kelly’s Ford, 25 miles upstream from the city of Fredericksburg.

A furious Averell specifically made the choice to reintroduce the saber in his hunt for Lee, telling his men to “sharpen their sabers and expect to win.” And in what would become the first all-cavalry action of the war, Averell’s men engaged Lee’s much smaller force of 800 in open battle.

Pressing their advantage nearly two miles across open ground, the Union riders were then repulsed five times by gray-clad sharpshooters before Lt. Simeon Brown managed to shoot the Union rides. The Confederate forces, exhausted from a full day’s fight and disheartened by the mortal wounding of J.E.B. Stuart’s chief artilleryman John Pelham, were in complete disarray.

Yet, with the momentum and advantage swinging toward the Union side, Averell “lost his nerve and withdrew to Union territory that evening.” Despite failing to achieve his primary objective, the clash proved that the refitted Union cavalry was, at long last, able to contend with the vaunted Confederate troops.

“It was a square, stand-up fight of over four hours duration, and the result proves that our cavalry, when well handled, is equal if not superior to the enemy,” a member of the Fourth New York Cavalry later recalled. The battle help set the stage for the June 1863 fight at Brandy Station and set in motion the ultimate cavalry clash at Gettysburg that July.

THE SECOND BATTLE OF RAPPAHANNOCK STATION

It was the Forgotten Full of 1863, but for the men under the command of Gen. George Meade, November was full of skirmishes up and down the Orange and Alexandria Railroad as Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee made his way back into Virginia following his defeat at Gettysburg.

The Battle of Rappahannock Station, the second time a clash had occurred near the small Virginia village, was the first major Union offensive attack since Gettysburg. Gen. Meade, pressured to make a move on Lee before campaign season concluded and buoyed by the slight Union success on October 14 at the Battle of Bristoe Station, devised a two-prong attack to dislodge the Confederate army hunkered down along the south bank of the Rappahannock River in Culpeper County.

Then, according to Battlefield Tours of Virginia, General Lee established a “strong defense fortifications on the north bank of the Rappahannock.... This foothold on the north bank, connected by a single pontoon bridge, would help to prevent a flanking movement by the enemy and would also make them divide their forces.” To Lee, Meade would be forced to play right into his hands.

Meade would, in fact, split his forces. He tasked Gen. John Sedgwick to attack Lee’s fortifications at Rappahannock Station and Gen. 27
William H. French with a forced crossing at Kelly’s Ford—but the November 7 battle soon became a rout for the Confederacy.

Lee’s plan depended on a smaller detachment of men, the famous Louisiana Tigers under Jubal Early, to hold off General Sedgwick’s soldiers at the Rappahannock Station bridgehead until the larger contingent of his army was able to quell General French at Kelly’s Ford. Very little went Lee’s way, however.

General Sedgwick shelled the Confederate Tigers all day but made no move in the daylight, leading Lee to believe this was only a feint. As daylight faded, however, Sedgwick released a rare nighttime attack, and a vicious bayonet assault ensued. Shadows engaged in hand-to-hand combat that led to a melee, with the Confederates believing Meade’s force to be much larger than it was.

More than 1,600 men clad in gray were captured, forcing General Lee’s army farther south into Orange County, as Meade’s men settled in around Culpeper for the winter.

Claire Bennett served as the longtime news and social media editor for the HistoryNet magazine network and is on the staff of Military Times.
A GOOD MARINE

Clark Hall’s legacy of service to his country and battlefield preservation starts in Vietnam

WHEN CLARK “BUD” HALL was a boy, growing up the youngest of eight in Neshoba County, Mississippi, he had two goals — to be a Marine and to be an FBI agent. “I accomplished both,” he says, without a hint of hubris, but instead an endearing mix of modest determination and humble astonishment looking back at what many consider a storied life.

The truth is, he “accomplished both” and then some.

Building upon esteemed careers in the military and with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Hall went on to help spearhead the modern battlefield preservation movement, the culmination of which is today’s American Battlefield Trust and nearly 60,000 acres of saved battlefield land, including his beloved Brandy Station Battlefield, which has now been preserved forever as part of Virginia’s newest state park.

BASIC TRAINING

An athletic teenager, Hall benefitted from the mentorship of coaches who recognized in him tenacity and leadership skills. He then joined the Marine Corps and “found the home for which I had been searching for 18 years.”

As a quiet, active and self-disciplined young Marine, Hall was, again, recognized and rewarded, moving through the ranks quicker than most. “Leadership positions were not sought, but rather earned, and promotions always came as a surprise, and a delight,” he says.

In June 1965, his unit was shipped off to Vietnam, a place, Hall admits, “We never even heard of.” The experience was heavy, rough and bitter — indescribable, really. And Hall saw many good Marines wounded and killed.

After enduring tough assignments in charge of men fighting in the jungle, many operations he would rather forget, but are impossible to, he served as security detail for Lt. Gen. Lewis Walt. During this assignment, Hall got to see a larger perspective of the war — the strategic. After his long service in Vietnam, he was selected as a Marine Corps Marathoner.

“Looking back,” he adds, “I do realize my Vietnam experience had a great deal to do with this subsequent, almost necessary involvement in battlefield preservation. Honored by the sudden death of Marine buddies and then coming home to an uncaring public that shrugged its shoulders (and worse) over our sacrifice, ‘nobody cared except for the families of those who were lost.’”

Fighting for Vietnam, Hall was training for the Marine Corps Marathon when, on a trail run, he made a discovery that compelled him to new action and a new chapter of his life, one he attacked with as much gusto and perseverance as everything he had previously. Stumbling upon the neglected monuments for Union Gen. Isaac Stevens and Philip Kearny on the overgrown and disheveled fields whereupon the September 1, 1862,

Battle of Ox Hill raged, Hall’s interest was piqued. The marker plot was overrun and two of the rails had fallen in.

Using his investigative skills, he soon uncovered the history of the markers, erected in 1915 to commemorate the generals on the battlefield where both had been mortally wounded during the fight. “I was immediately stunned as to why the markers were so badly neglected,” Hall says, and that “nobody cared.”

“Looking back,” he adds, “I do realize my Vietnam experience had a great deal to do with this subsequent, almost necessary involvement in battlefield preservation. Honored by the sudden death of Marine buddies and then coming home to an uncaring public that shrugged its shoulders (and worse) over our sacrifice, ‘nobody cared except for the families of those who were lost.’”

Knowing the ultimate sacrifice of these two generals and observing that “nobody cared,” Hall says, “This, I could not abide, as before, and considering I was in America, on American turf, I went to work.” Trees and vines were removed from the marker plot, and the rails were re-connected and painted. Thereafter, Hall mowed the plot every Sunday morning.

“Someone finally cared, and soon our number was three,” Hall says.

When Northern Virginia development threatened to encroach the land and developers sought to move the monuments, Hall, along with fellow battlefield preservationists Ed Wenzel and Brian Pshanka, established the Chantilly Battlefield Association, widely perceived as the first Civil War battlefield preservation organization of the modern era. Hall and others soon set their sights on saving additional battlefield land, and in 1987, the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites was formed. It is one of the two preservation organizations that would merge to form today’s American Battlefield Trust.

The rest, as they say, is history, or at least the preservation of it.

A deep personal connection to the battlefields and the stories of the soldiers they hold compels Hall to continue the fight. “That people don’t care, I simply can’t fathom,” Hall says. ★
BRAVERY AT BRANDY STATION:
The legacy of George Caspar Hupp

On June 9, 1863, Sgt. George Caspar Hupp turned 26 years old — he also charged into battle as part of the 8th Illinois Cavalry at Brandy Station. Participating in the battle that “made the Federal cavalry,” young George was wounded that day and left to suffer with the impact of the battlefield injury for the remainder of his life.

But George’s Civil War service both preceded and succeeded his experience at the Battle of Brandy Station. On September 18, 1861, George Caspar Hupp, a farmer from Northville, Ill., mustered in for service with the 8th Illinois Cavalry. He was 23 years old, stood at 5’10”, with brown hair and brown eyes to match. His soldiership must have impressed, as George was immediately selected sergeant of Company K and held the rank for three years before he was promoted to second lieutenant and later to first lieutenant — the rank he held until being honorably discharged at the close of service, July 17, 1865, in St. Louis, Mo.

Said to be a brave soldier — always ready for duty and prompt to obey or command — George fought at Williamsburg; Fair Oaks, east of Richmond; Gaines’ Mill; Antietam; Fredericksburg, east of Richmond; and upright life.

After George passed on October 31, 1906, a sincere and addressable character: “Mr. Hupp was industrious and thorough, a man of high ideals. Scrupulously honest and honorable, just and true in all his business affairs. After a life of good works and useful activities, after a life of good works and useful activities, of sincere and unselfish devotion to his country, his family and his fellow men, a just man has passed to his reward leaving to his family the priceless heritage of a good name and an honorable and upright life.”

Subsequent generations of the Hupp family have kept George’s legacy alive and have been a powerful force in the world of battlefield preservation. His third great grandson, William Hupp, is the current vice chair of the American Battlefield Trust’s Board of Trustees. A marker honoring the contributions of both men stands on Fertwood Hill at Brandy Station, where the Trust vigilantly preserved pivotal acreage that will now be met with the footsteps of visitors to Culpeper Battlefields State Park. **
The Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area aims to promote and support civic engagement through history education, drive economic development through heritage tourism, and preserve cultural landscapes in one of the nation’s most important historic regions.

Established in 1972, the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) safeguards Virginia’s Piedmont, promoting sustainability. With headquarters in Warrenton, VA, PEC operates across nine counties and Charlottesville.

• **Culpeper Battlefield Tours**, launched in 2022, provides walking, horseback, car and bus tours of the Brandy Station Battlefield and explains its role in the Gettysburg Campaign. These tours are conducted by certified guides who are some of the foremost local experts on the Civil War and Culpeper’s wartime history. Tours of each category can vary in length and destination and can be further customized to tailor to a specific interest or personal connection.

• Chartered in 1956, **Historic Germanna** recognizes the experiences of many people who have called Culpeper home. This public history organization’s programs focus on educational, genealogical and historical resources, while its preservation of Salubria, near Hansbrough’s Ridge in Culpeper County, offers visitors the opportunity to visit a fascinating colonial site.

• **The Museum of Culpeper History**, housed in the historic Culpeper Train Depot, is the central interpretive institution for the area. Covering more than 215 million years, the museum recounts Culpeper’s prehistoric, American Indian, Revolutionary and Civil War history. The museum also organizes lectures, walking tours and special events throughout the year.

• Representing the local business network of Culpeper, the **Culpeper Chamber of Commerce** is an extraordinary resource for assisting the area’s commercial enterprises and nonprofit groups — more than 450 individuals and organizations.

• **Culpeper Tourism** has been a key element of the campaign to draw heritage tourism to the area. Also located in the historic Culpeper Train Depot, Culpeper Tourism’s visitor center offers information, maps and brochures to help inform a wonderful visit to Culpeper.

**Country's Mightiest Military Decoration**

**Culpeper’s Medal of Honor connections**

**IKE SO MANY**

other landscapes worldwide.

Culpeper County has a connection to our nation’s highest award for valor. A total of seven Medals of Honor were awarded for actions in and around Culpeper during the course of the Civil War. War first visited the county in the summer of 1862, when Union Maj. Gen. John Pope set his sights on capturing the rail junction at Gordonsville, southwest of Culpeper. Gen. Robert E. Lee countered by sending Maj. Gen. Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson to defend the town.

Jackson clashed with elements of Pope’s command under Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks at Cedar Mountain on August 9. During the battle, Pvt. John Younker of the 12th U.S. Infantry voluntarily carried an order through enemy fire and was wounded. He received the Medal of Honor for this action on November 1, 1863. Amid an attack, Capt. George Curfess picked up and carried the 5th Connecticut’s flag, “until he was brought to the ground by a bullet wound in the leg. He, however, planted the flag-staff in the earth . . . and bravely upheld the flag after he had fallen.” Like Younker, Curfess also received the medal.

Lee eventually concentrated his attack, and Pope pulled back behind the Rappahannock. Two weeks after Cedar Mountain, the two sides skirmished at Rappahannock Station. There, Pvt. Charles Breyer of the 90th Pennsylvania witnessed a shell sever the arm of a comrade. Breyer immediately grabbed the shell, which had not detonated, and threw it out of harm’s way, saving his own as well as the lives of others. He received the medal for this act in July 1866. Another member of the regiment, John Henry White, also received the medal for carrying canteens under fire to retrieve water for fellow soldiers.

Later in the month, Lee defeated Pope on the Manassas Battlefield and then launched an invasion of the North that culminated at Antietam Creek on September 17. The armies returned to Virginia, where the Federals suffered setbacks at Fredericksburg in December and Chancellorville in May 1863. Following up on these victories, Lee decided to invade the North once again. On June 9, the largest cavalry battle of the war took place in Culpeper across the fields and ridges near Brandy Station. Subsequently, Maj. Gen. George Meade defeated Lee at Gettysburg in July, and the armies again drifted back to Virginia. Meade and Lee then engaged in the Bristoe Station Campaign that fall before the Confederates fell back to the Rappahannock.

Meade attacked the Confederates on November 7 at Rappahannock Station and Kelly’s Ford. Sgt. Otis Roberts of the 6th Maine received the medal for capturing the flag of the 8th Louisiana in hand-to-hand combat at Rappahannock Station. Capt. Walter Morrill of the 20th Maine also received the medal there when he “joined the storming party with about 50 men of his regiment and by his dash and gallantry rendered effective service in the assault.”

Lee withdrew behind the Rapidan, and Meade followed. After crossing the river at Raccoon Ford on November 27, the 5th New York Cavalry engaged Confederate cavalry. At some point during the fight, Pvt. Loron Packard assisted another trooper and saved him from three Confederates. Packard later received the medal for this action.

Stymied in front of the Confederate position at Mine Run, Meade returned to Culpeper, where the Army of the Potomac went into winter encampment. The army departed in May 1864, opening the Overland Campaign. Although the conflict moved elsewhere, the actions in and around Culpeper that resulted in a Medal of Honor continue to resonate more than 160 years later.
No visit to Culpeper is complete without a visit to the town’s iconic Graffiti House, a Civil War-era house used as a hospital by both Union and Confederate troops. Drawings, messages and the signatures of Civil War soldiers treated here are scrawled about the walls of the second floor, giving the house its popular moniker.

Culpeper offers a host of award-winning breweries and eateries at which to refuel and relax after a day of exploring. The area’s Gray Ghost Vineyards is the most awarded winery in all of Virginia and nearby Death Ridge Brewery has been voted the best brewery in Culpeper.

Looking for some unique outdoor experiences? Culpeper has those, too! At the Auburn Sunflower Patch, visitors can pick and purchase their own flowers; at the Bealeton Flying Circus Air Show, you can watch planes take flight; and visitors to Lenn Park can pack in for a charming park experience, including a mix of history and modern-day facilities. 

Celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Culpeper Resolves of 1774, a public statement supporting American independence, and learn about the role the Culpeper Baptist Church played in supporting protections for religious freedom at the Museum of Culpeper History, housed in the town’s historic train depot.

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The American Battlefield Trust has partnered with streaming service MagellanTV to present a dynamic new six-part documentary series *Battlefield America: The Civil War* featuring our animated battle maps and historians.

**WATCH NOW!**

Watch it now with donor and member deals available here.