



AMERICAN
BATTLEFIELD
TRUST ★ ★ ★
PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

This could
be one of
our largest
successes ever.

To protect the
site of the most
consequential
attack of the
Civil War!

**BUT FIRST,
WE HAVE TO
MAKE THE
DEADLINE
BY RAISING
THE FUNDS
BEFORE THE
END OF THE
YEAR!**

Dear Fellow Preservationist and Patriot,

There are few moments in the Civil War—or in American history—more consequential than The Breakthrough at Petersburg.

The name says it all. It was the extraordinary moment when, after 292 days of siege warfare, troops under the command of Gen.

Ulysses S. Grant broke through the Confederate lines to capture Petersburg, Virginia, which led to the fall of the Confederate capital in Richmond. **Just seven days**

later, Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered his army to Grant, effectively ending the war.



GRANT



LEE

America was changed forever on that battlefield! Which is why we've been actively trying to save as much land in and around The Breakthrough as we can over the years—tract by tract—trying to piece as much of the battle's story together as possible.

But today, I have something unique and extraordinary to share with you. I hope you're sitting down because this is BIG!

The Trust has been presented with the opportunity to preserve 417 acres of powerful, pivotal, nation-shaping history at The Breakthrough.

And this time, it's not a farm or a field we have the chance to help save, *but an existing battlefield park.*

You may know it as Pamplin Historical Park. If you're a well-traveled Civil War history enthusiast, you may have even visited it a time or two. What you may not know is that Pamplin is a privately owned park sitting on critical battlefield land associated with the Campaigns for Petersburg. It hosts some of the most pristine earthworks of the Civil War, important historic buildings, significant undeveloped battlefield acres, and even a monument honoring Medal of Honor recipient Captain Charles G. Gould of the 5th Vermont, who's been called "*The First Man Over the Works.*"

But here's the problem: the land is privately owned with no federal or state protections in place. Back in the early 1990s, Dr. Robert Pamplin stepped up and purchased this battlefield land. The Trust even played a role in helping him. He created Pamplin Historical Park, a well-preserved, visitor-friendly Civil War site. A true treasure!

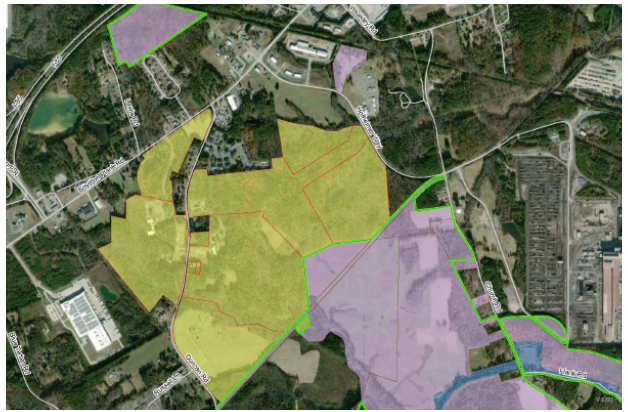
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But with the active, aggressive land development that is devouring open space in Virginia as you read this, the need to permanently protect this battlefield NOW is critical. Developers are knocking ... pressuring ... offering millions to acquire acres like these. The park is under serious threat.

What's more ... *most of the land is actually zoned for industrial, commercial, and residential use, which means that if the land is sold, it could quickly become a series of cookie-cutter mixed-use housing and retail developments, a block of distribution warehouses, or even massive data centers.*



The land at Pamplin Historical Park at Petersburg (The Breakthrough) Battlefield, shown in yellow above, must be protected from developers.

We can't let that happen. We were there at the beginning, supporting Dr. Pamplin when the park first opened. And now, we're here again, fighting to protect our history when we're needed most.

But this is a big ask. All told, it's going to cost more than \$11 million. *Yes, you read that right.* However, I have some good news. Thanks to expected grants, we can secure this historical gem IF we can raise the **last \$660,000 before the end of the year.**

So ... we have less than six months to try to pull this off. We need to raise \$660,000 to secure the permanent protection of 417 acres at The Breakthrough, along with all the earthworks, historic farmland, and Civil War-era buildings.

I'm hoping I can count on you to help us get to the closing table with the funds in hand. Please make your best gift to the American Battlefield Trust today!

In terms of leverage, this deal has an amazing \$17-to-\$1 multiplier on every dollar donated, which means your gift will be worth more than 17 times the cost. Just think, a donation of \$50 is worth \$850, and a gift of \$1,000 is worth \$17,000 in purchasing power!

I'm sure you have some questions about this one. *I would, too!* It's not your average battlefield preservation campaign.

First, let me be clear: we're not taking over a museum. We're not staffing exhibits. We're not running daily living histories for schoolchildren. Pamplin Historical Park will continue to operate as it has for years. **Bottom line: we're protecting this hallowed ground forever. That's the Trust's mission. That's your mission.**

Our goal is to get every acre under permanent protection so the land can never again be threatened. The earthworks, the open space, the history. All of it will be safe.

If we don't save it? That's another story, and quite frankly, there's no telling what it could turn into.

The land's prime location along U.S. Route 1, just minutes from I-85, makes it highly attractive to developers. And since nearby Richmond is now the fourth fastest-growing urban area in America, developers are snapping up every acre they can get. It's a feeding frenzy, and they're drooling over this one!

Here's just one recent example that illustrates the bidding war for land. Earlier this year, 29 acres located next to this park were listed for an astounding **\$100,000 per acre**. It is reportedly under contract to a developer of warehouse/distribution facilities. At that price, these 417 acres at The Breakthrough would fetch nearly \$42 million. I'm pretty sure that anyone who paid that much wouldn't be keeping a historical park on the land!

But we will ensure the battlefield historical park endures, if we can raise the funds in time. And I'm going to do everything I can to make sure we come up with the last \$660,000 to meet the deadline.

Because I know what's at stake ...

My friend, Petersburg is widely regarded as one of the most important Campaigns of the Civil War, and The Breakthrough was perhaps its most consequential assault. No other attack resulted directly in something as important as the fall of the Confederate Capital at Richmond.



Siege of Petersburg — a pivotal campaign marked by trench warfare, relentless assaults, and the eventual fall of Richmond. © Science History Images, Alamy

The Petersburg Campaigns lasted from June 15, 1864, to April 2, 1865, and included 292 days of combat, nine offensives, endless maneuvers, and constant trench warfare. By April 1, 1865, Lee knew his army was in dire straits. The Southside Railroad had been severed. Its only lines of retreat were in jeopardy, too. Lee was desperate to buy time ... *and feared a sudden Union attack so powerful that his army would be unable to defend its position any longer.*

The attack he feared came on April 2, 1865. **It was *The Breakthrough*.**

At midnight, Union guns bombarded the Confederate fortifications with fire and fury. In the 10 long months that Lee's army had held the line at Petersburg, his troops had never seen or endured a bombardment like this one.

Union artillerymen were using every gun available, and the night sky was filled with the burning arcs of shells as they made their way towards the Confederate fortifications.

Slowly, the Union troops advanced, followed by rank upon rank of infantry with fixed bayonets. Gen. John Parke and his men were among the first to arrive, attacking Fort Mahone.

There, at "*Fort Damnation*," about 3,600 men under Confederate Gen. John B. Gordon held their ground as long as they could, raking the waves of Union infantry with salvos of double-canister and volleys of rifle fire.

But the Union troops kept coming. Here, they plunged into the rain-flooded ditch at the base of the Confederate breastworks. There, they scrambled up the sides of the earthworks, and jumped into the stronghold, fighting hand-to-hand with bayonets and rifle butts.

The fighting was bloody and terrible. Men from both sides fought with enormous valor—the actions at The Breakthrough at Petersburg resulted in 27 Medals of Honor on the land we will acquire—plus another four on adjacent land the Trust already owns.

In the predawn hours of April 2, when Union General Horatio Wright's VI corps at last crept out of its trenches and charged across no man's land, punching a hole in the Confederate line, Federal forces attained the breakthrough that Grant had long sought.

The Union Army now had access to the Appomattox River and was free to cross the next day to threaten Lee's communications on the north side of the waterway. After dark, Lee informed President Jefferson Davis that he could "*hold his position no longer.*"

Grant had achieved one of the major military objectives of the war: the capture of Petersburg, which led directly to the fall of Richmond on April 3, 1865.

Fast forward for a moment from these climactic days in 1865 to 1991. Dr. Pamplin begins acquiring land where The Breakthrough battle took place, and Pamplin Historical Park later opens its doors. We are grateful for the Pamplins' stewardship of the land that generations of Americans have experienced. Dr. Pamplin's foresight was truly a gift to the nation.

Now, fast forward again to 2025. With the land being entirely unprotected, it has become more and more difficult to keep the developers at bay. Investment companies, tech companies, and other wealthy developers who can pull out their checkbooks and write checks for **\$20 or \$40 or \$60 million** are banging on the doors of farmers and other landowners offering to buy their land, creating enormous pressure and making the operation of a private historical battlefield park almost untenable.

We have a chance to secure and protect this land forever, but at the same time, I don't mind telling you, this deal will be one of the biggest we've ever put together ... and we're not in the clear yet.

That's why I'm hoping I can count on you to help with this historic effort!

I've suggested a few giving amounts on the enclosed response form, but I will be grateful for any gift you can make today. And if you can give \$50 or more right away, I will send you our special 'thank you' gift—our limited-edition Petersburg Campaign Challenge Coin. It's the latest in our collector's series.

My friend, I've walked this land. I've seen the trenches. I've stood on the very ground where men fought and died. And I've thought about the generations who will never get the chance to experience these hallowed acres if we fail to protect them.

I don't want to see bulldozers where soldiers once charged. I don't want to see trucks idling on top of a battlefield where courage defined a nation.

I want to see school buses. I want to see veterans. I want to see children tracing their fingers over maps, understanding, maybe for the first time, the cost of freedom.

But to do that, we have to act. And we have to act now.

Please help us add these extraordinary 417 acres to the hundreds of acres you've already helped us save at The Breakthrough, and let's save this land for the future of America's history.

Please make your best gift today. Your support will be multiplied \$17-to-\$1. And your impact? It will last forever.



With my sincere gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David N. Duncan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

David N. Duncan
President

P.S. I think of those brave men, Union and Confederate, fighting outside Richmond until the bitter end. I'm sure many of them were scared. I'm sure they were tired and hungry. But they fought on, with courage few today can imagine. This is what we fight to save. The hallowed ground where blood was spilled, honor was shown, and history was made at the most consequential battle of the Civil War. Will you please make your best gift today? You can give by mail or online at battlefields.org/attack and receive our limited-edition Petersburg Campaign Challenge Coin. **Thank you!**