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AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST

# HALLOWED GROUND

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EXPLORE THE PETERSBURG BREAKTHROUGH

*with* EDWARD C. BYERS, JR. | MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT



**HALLOWED GROUND**  
A quarterly publication of the American Battlefield Trust

Fall 2025  
Vol. 26, No. 3

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THE AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST preserves our nation's hallowed battlefields and educates the public about what happened there and why it matters today. We permanently protect these battlefields as a lasting and tangible memorial to the brave soldiers who fought in the American Revolution, the War of 1812 and the Civil War. Thanks to the contributions of more than 300,000 members and supporters nationwide, we have preserved more than 60,000 acres at 160 sites in 25 states. For more information, call 800-298-7878 or visit our website at [www.battlefields.org](http://www.battlefields.org). *Hallowed Ground* is the membership magazine of the American Battlefield Trust. It is produced solely for nonprofit educational purposes and every reasonable attempt is made to provide accurate and appropriate attribution for all elements, including those in the public domain. Contemporary images are reproduced only with permission and appropriate attribution; uncredited images are courtesy the American Battlefield Trust. Feature articles reflect the research and opinion of the bylined author. ©2025 American Battlefield Trust.



**AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST**  
★ ★ ★

PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.



**WHEN I TALK ABOUT** the mission of the American Battlefield Trust, I like to say that “we are in the forever business.” Because the work that we do will last long beyond our own lifetimes, we naturally think on a

different sort of time scale. A relationship with a landowner may take shape slowly, cultivated over months or years as they consider the prospect of preservation and, then, as we discuss the specifics of a transaction.

This autumn, our conversations at Trust HQ have been abuzz with a pair of transactions whose horizons have been especially long, even by our standards. The permanent protection of both the square mile of “dual battlefield” at the center of our Gaines’ Mill Cold Harbor *Saved Forever Campaign* and the Pamplin Park Complex have truly been on our collective radar for decades. The specter of these huge projects — in terms of acreage, significance and cost — have been on my mind since I joined the Trust 25 years ago. I vividly remember multiple board meetings where our leadership insisted we lay the groundwork so we might be ready if either of the opportunities should ever arise.

Well, my fellow preservationists, they eventually did. And our extensive preliminary legwork paid off. They were complicated transactions with high price tags, but thoughtful planning ensured that we could pursue them without jeopardizing our ability to simultaneously pursue our typical steady stream of projects. This did not make them easy; as you have seen in the many periodic mailings and updates, with even our phased fundraising goals were ambitious.

But as I write you this letter, the conclusion of each of these major projects is in sight. I will not celebrate prematurely, but I believe that, once again, incredibly generous donors like you have agreed with us that these are monumentally significant properties and have stepped forward. Not only am I deeply grateful for this, but I — with my perspective across long association with



*David N. Duncan*

DAVID N. DUNCAN  
President, American Battlefield Trust

## IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HEROES

Experience the power of place through the Brothers in Valor project. In ABT's newest video, Medal of Honor recipient Ed Byers walks through the experiences of Capt. Charles G. Gould, another recipient of the award at The Breakthrough. [www.battlefields.org/medal-of-honor](http://www.battlefields.org/medal-of-honor)

## TAKE A TOUR FROM HOME

If you can't make it to a battlefield, explore the site with one of the Trust's 360° Virtual Tours. Featuring clickable tour points, photos and more, immerse yourself in the history from the comfort of your own home. Start with The Breakthrough at [www.battlefields.org/breakthrough-virtual](http://www.battlefields.org/breakthrough-virtual)

## HIT THE FIELD

The Trust's Battle App™ guides allow users to explore the battlefield in-depth and with confidence. Download the Petersburg Campaign version at [www.battlefields.org/petersburg-battle-app](http://www.battlefields.org/petersburg-battle-app)



## PUT HISTORY ON THE MAP

Watch battles unfold in front of you with the Trust's animated battle maps, complete with troop movement animations, narratives, reenactment footage and more. From Lexington to Yorktown, Gettysburg to Appomattox Court House, watch how America's wars shaped history. [www.battlefields.org/animated-maps](http://www.battlefields.org/animated-maps)

EXPLORE  
THIS ISSUE



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## INTERIM VICTORIES AGAINST DATA CENTERS

*Updates on legal battles at Manassas, Wilderness*

**I**N RECENT MONTHS, the American Battlefield Trust has celebrated two major legal victories in our fights to save hallowed ground at Manassas and the Wilderness battlefields, where data center complexes pose monumental threats.

### Prince William Digital Gateway

At Manassas, although an appeal on the Trust's case (which had been dismissed in demurrer hearings last fall) is still pending, a parallel suit brought by the Oak Valley Homeowners Association, which shares many legal arguments, succeeded at trial. Circuit Court Judge Kimberly Irving ruled in favor of the Oak Valley Homeowners Association's claims a lame duck Board of Supervisors in Prince William County improperly approved the rezoning for the Prince William Digital Gateway. Those rezonings—which were approved with insufficient review of data center impacts, gave inadequate public notice and included unlawful waivers of key analyses—were voided by the August ruling.

The Prince William Digital Gateway (PWDG) is a massive 2,100-acre data center proposal in Prince William County, Virginia—slated to be the largest single data center development on Earth. Plans call for up to 37 buildings nearly 100 feet tall, with an energy demand equal to 750,000 homes—five times the number in the county today. The site lies on both the core and study areas of the Manassas Battlefield, and was approved

despite strong public opposition and a 27-hour hearing in December 2023, paving the way for this colossal threat to hallowed ground.

### Wilderness Crossing

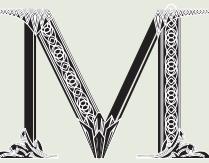
The Trust is also celebrating another legal victory down the road in Orange County, Virginia. After long and careful deliberation, the judge in the Wilderness Crossing matter advanced four of our seven counts to trial. In a 17-page letter opinion issued on September 16, 2025, Circuit Court Judge David B. Franzén rejected the attempts by Orange County and the developers of the Wilderness Crossing project to throw out the case. The remaining counts challenge the rezoning as having been approved in violation of Virginia law governing rezoning processes, public hearings and the equal taxation of land.

The Wilderness Crossing mega-development is poised to bring huge swaths of development across multiple categories—from single-family homes to data centers, distribution warehouses and other light-industrial uses. All this would be built just across Route 3 from where 160,000 Union and Confederate soldiers clashed in May 1864, during one of the most important battles of the Civil War. The Wilderness Crossing project was approved over near-unanimous public opposition in the spring of 2023. Ahead of its vote, the Board ignored repeated requests from the preservation community, the National Parks Service, and others to study the impact of this largest rezoning in Orange County history.★

Data Center construction in Virginia.  
ROBERT JAMES

## AMERICAN REVOLUTION COLLABORATION

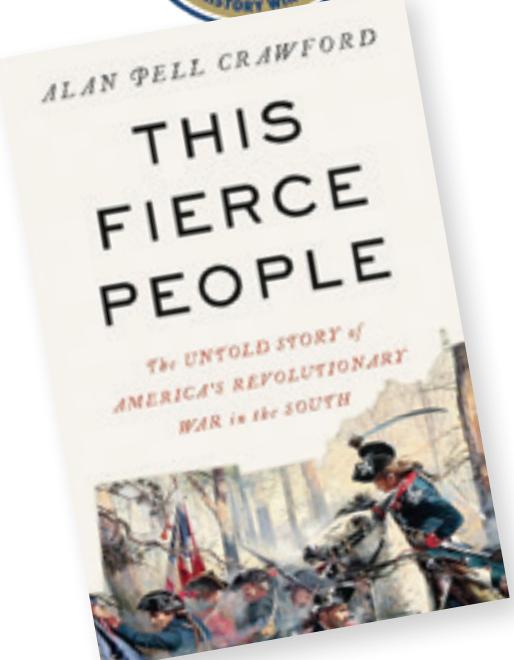
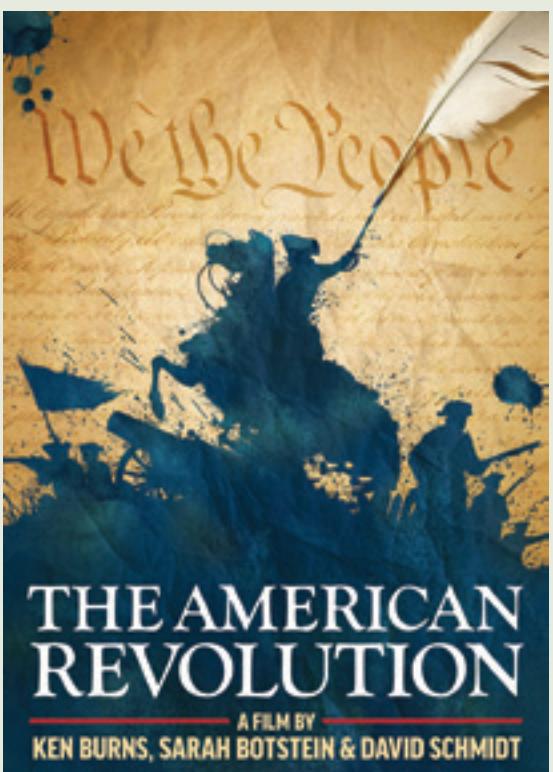
*Ken Burns's new film brings the Revolution, and the Trust, to you*



ILLIONS of Americans are expected to watch the much-anticipated debut of Ken Burns's new documentary *The American Revolution*. As you tune in, keep an eye peeled for American Battlefield Trust historical content!

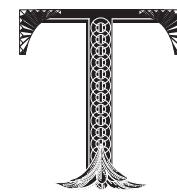
It is a great honor for the Trust to have been selected by PBS (with WETA, the Washington, D.C., affiliate, as originating sponsor) to serve as an official collaborator and content provider for the broadcast. We are thrilled that Trust resources will be disseminated to educators and promoted online in coordination with the film.

As this important film becomes a conversation topic in your community, please help us by sharing the ongoing nature of battlefield preservation, ensuring that this hallowed ground remains for generations yet to come!★



## CELEBRATING THE "BEST BOOKS IN HISTORY"

*Honor bestowed on Alan Pell Crawford, 2025 nominations sought*



**HIS FIERCE PEOPLE:** *The Untold Story of America's Revolutionary War in the South* by Alan Pell Crawford has been named winner of the American Battlefield Trust Prize for History, topping an outstanding field of titles tackling a wide range of topics in military history. A selection panel and distinguished judges considered more than three dozen works from 15 different publishing houses to arrive at the decision.

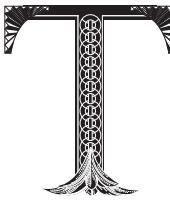
"As we mark the 250th anniversary of our fight for independence, it is important for Americans to learn the full, powerful story of those events," said Trust President David Duncan. "The Revolution was more than a handful of battles and an important document signed by statesmen. As Alan Pell Crawford so eloquently highlights, our freedom required years of struggle and hardship undertaken by ordinary people too often forgotten."

The American Battlefield Trust Prize for History carries a \$50,000 award, making it one of the most prestigious military history book prizes. The effort is endowed by a generous donor, meaning it does not detract from the organization's primary land preservation mission. Rather, it is designed to showcase how outstanding scholarship benefits from access to historic battlefields, which, alongside documents like letters and reports, represent a meaningful type of "primary source" that shapes understanding of events.

Nominations are now open for next year's prize, recognizing outstanding works published in calendar year 2025. Full details and instructions for publishers to submit titles from their catalog are available at [www.battlefields.org/bookprize](http://www.battlefields.org/bookprize).★



## PRESERVATION ADVANCES AT FRANKLIN Demolition marks big step in site restoration



HE AMERICAN Battlefield Trust and its allies ended summer with a celebration of the latest victory in their ongoing work to reclaim Tennessee's Franklin Battlefield and their first steps in on-site rehabilitation. Two newly acquired parcels are located just south of the historic Carter House and saw heavy casualties during the November 30, 1864, fighting.

As with other expensive Franklin projects, this work would not have been possible without the availability of matching grants from the federal American Battlefield Protection Program and the Tennessee Civil War Sites Preservation Fund (TCWSF), administered by the Tennessee Wars Commission, a division of the Tennessee Historical Commission, State Historic Preservation Office, as well as support from local preservation groups and local government investment.

Demolition of now-vacant warehouses on the protected properties began at the end of September, with Trust President David Duncan excitedly donning a hard hat and wielding a sledgehammer as the walls came down. These properties connect two previously protected portions of the battlefield, and the historic viewshed is well on its way to being restored as sightlines open.

Since 1996, and with the assistance of government agencies and local officials, the Trust has partnered with organizations like Franklin's Charge and the Battle of Franklin Trust to reclaim 182 acres of the battlefield. Much of this land had previously been "lost" to strip malls and fast-food restaurants, but lot by lot, this grassroots-driven work has created a heritage tourism destination. The Herbert Harper Visitor Center at the Carter House State Historic Site, now under construction, will usher in a new era for Franklin. Learn more at [www.battlefields.org/franklin-victory](http://www.battlefields.org/franklin-victory)★



Franklin Battlefield  
Franklin, Tenn.  
Both photos by PEYTON HOGE

## NEW INTERPRETATION AT VICKSBURG Visitor center and more coming to the Vicksburg Campaign



WETHER it's the latest installment of a popular video series or steps toward a new visitor center for the national park and historic community, upgraded interpretation opportunities for the Vicksburg Campaign are on the docket this fall!

The Trust's Vicksburg Driving Tour, featuring acclaimed historian Tim Smith (twice a finalist for the American Battlefield Trust Prize for History with his five-part series on the Vicksburg Campaign), guides users through 30 key sites, including the Illinois Memorial, Third Louisiana Redan, Stockade Redan, the U.S.S. *Cairo* and the Railroad Redoubt. It joins similar popular installments for Chickamauga, Gettysburg, Shiloh and Yorktown.

Meanwhile, the Trust joined with the National Parks Conservation Association, National Trust for Historic Preservation and Coalition to Protect America's National Parks to pen an open letter endorsing the Vicksburg National Military Park Boundary Modification Act (S. 1016 and H.R. 4467), which provides for a small but critical adjustment to the boundary. If passed, two properties totaling 11 acres would be transferred to the State of Mississippi to allow for construction of a much-needed new visitor center.

As the legislation proceeds through Congress this fall, Trust supporters are invited to use our online mechanism to sign a letter to their federal legislators advocating for the bill's passage. Visit [www.battlefields.org/speak-out](http://www.battlefields.org/speak-out)★

## BRISTOE STATION PRESERVATION CONTINUES

Trust transfers land to Prince William County



**RISTOE STATION** Battlefield Heritage Park has grown by 22 acres, following the American Battlefield Trust's transfer of additional property into Prince William County's stewardship. Originally purchased by the Trust in late 2021, the property is bordered by Bristow Road and the Norfolk Southern rail line and witnessed combat during both the Battle of Kettle Run (August 27, 1862) and the Battle of Bristoe Station (October 14, 1863).

In 1862, soldiers of the 60th Georgia took up positions on this ground along the railroad, engaging Union troops in fierce fighting that included a hand-to-hand struggle over the regiment's flag. In October 1863, Union troops from New York charged across the same fields under fire, ultimately reaching the safety of the railroad embankment. Backed by Union artillery on the property, they repulsed the Confederate attack at Bristoe Station.

Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park opened to the public in 2006, the result of collaboration between the Trust and county government officials. It now encompasses more than 160 acres and features three miles of interpretive walking trails that explore the site's two Civil War battles and the area's military encampments from 1861 to 1865.

Despite this exciting step forward, other portions of the Bristoe Station Battlefield have recently suffered from encroaching development. The Trust is engaged in negotiations to secure maximum mitigation measures stemming from the construction of a major distribution warehouse complex within the battlefield footprint.★



Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park  
Bristow, Va.  
MATTHEW HOLZMAN

## SECOND ANNUAL MUSIC COMPETITION Compose the music of America's past



OR THE SECOND consecutive year, the American Battlefield Trust and the Ray and Vera Conniff Foundation are partnering to inspire young musicians to compose songs of America's past. This year's contest, *Songs of a Young Nation*, seeks original compositions reflective of America's first century, from the Revolution to Reconstruction. The contest is open to all musicians aged 15 to 30 — including high school and college students, as well as young independent, unsigned artists.

"Music is deeply woven throughout the rich tapestry of our nation's history," said Trust President David Duncan. "I look forward to hearing the ways these talented young artists connect our past to the present through song."

Musicians are asked to submit a 60- to 90-second original composition or reinterpretation of a historical song. Entries are now open through the end of the year. Winners will be announced in February 2026, just in time for America's Semiquicentennial.

This year, prizes will be awarded in four categories: Best Historical Treatment, Best Original Composition, Best Use of Historical Instruments and Best Performance. Each category's winner will be determined by an esteemed panel of judges: country music star and former Trustee Trace Adkins; Tamara Conniff, partner and CEO of Amplified Music Rights; Tommy Skeoch, musician and former Tesla band member; and Bret Werb, music collection curator at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Winners receive a \$3,500 cash prize.



For more information and complete submission guidelines, visit the Trust's website.★

## YOUTH LEADERSHIP TEAM

Introducing the 2025-2026 cohort



ONGRATULATIONS to the members of the 2025-2026 Youth Leadership Team! This group of 10 ambitious students is ready to bring history to life in their communities while serving as the youth face and voice of the Trust. Over the next year, they will advocate for historic preservation and education through personalized projects that reflect their passions. This year's capstones range from producing short films to creating historical markers, and all cohort members have said they look forward to connecting with other history-minded students from across the country.

The 2025-2026 application pool was the largest yet, a testament to the long-running success of the program. Once chosen from a pool of competitive applicants, participants receive comprehensive training aligned with the Trust's mission, including instruction in navigating the intricacies of land preservation and the principles of place-based education, plus essential advocacy skills like engaging with media and petitioning support from public officials. In addition to working toward their capstone project, team members will participate in a special youth-focused advocacy day in Washington and present at the Trust's Annual Conference.

The full roster of the 2025-2026 Youth Leadership Team is: David Buck, 16, of Kinston, N.C.; Mumtaz Cooper, 17, of Elizabeth, N.J.; Manton Du, 17, of Weymouth, Mass.; Olivia Grote, 17, of Bismarck, N.D.; Corinne Kalognos, 16, of Moreno Valley, Calif.; Emmaline Leandro, 15, of Gilford, N.H.; William Moffet, 15, of Ponte Vedra, Fla.; Emmanuel Puddussey, 17, of Riverside, Calif.; Siddharth Tripathi, 17, of San Antonio, Tex.; and Meryl Wittmer, 15, of Oakwood, Ohio;

Learn more at [www.battlefields.org/ylt](http://www.battlefields.org/ylt).★



Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park  
Kennesaw, Ga.  
BRIAN KEELEY PHOTOGRAPHY

## CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

### Our Enduring Legacy campaign nearing major milestone

**T**HANKS TO the remarkable support of our community, the Trust's ongoing capital campaign is well on its way to success. In recognition of America's upcoming 250th birthday, we have made it our goal to raise \$125 million by July 4, 2026, to safeguard our nation's historic battlefields for future generations.

*Our Enduring Legacy: The Campaign to Preserve, Educate, and Inspire*, is the largest and most ambitious effort in battlefield preservation history. This comprehensive campaign will provide the critical resources needed to expand preservation efforts, meet today's challenges, and seize tomorrow's opportunities.

Within this campaign comes the creation of the Battlefield Readiness Fund, a new strategy for the evolving, competitive market. This fund allows the Trust to be proactive in land acquisition, act swiftly on pivotal issues, and transform our ability to preserve endangered hallowed ground. The cost when preservation is delayed only grows – not just financially, but in the meaningful interpretation of the land and inspiration in saving America's irreplaceable history.

To date, the campaign has raised more than \$123 million in commitments, including \$22.5 million in future planned gift designations, bringing us within sight of our \$125 million goal. Every dollar raised will save more land, provide more educational resources, and inspire more people. Join us today to help us reach our goal and leave your mark for generations to come.★

## IN MEMORIAM

### NICHOLAS PICERNO

*Passionate historian  
and preservationist*

**N**ICHOLAS Picerno was not only a long-time friend of the American Battlefield Trust, he was

also a champion of preservation and history. Picerno spearheaded efforts to save Virginia's battlefields, such as Third Winchester, the largest Civil War battle fought in the Shenandoah Valley. Chairman Emeritus of Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, Picerno remained active on the foundation's board, becoming its longest-tenured member. He was a leading expert on the 10th Maine Infantry and frequently contributed his insights to historical publications. His presence, passion and expertise will be deeply missed by historians and friends across the preservation community.

Nicholas Picerno passed away on October 8, 2025, following a long illness.★



### DON PFANZ

*Sparked modern battlefield preservation movement*

**D**ON PFANZ'S impact on the American Battlefield Trust cannot be overstated – without him, there may not have been a Trust. Serving as National Park Service historian at Petersburg National Battlefield in 1987, he wrote a letter that led to the creation of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, a predecessor organization of the modern Trust, and launched the modern Civil War battlefield preservation movement.

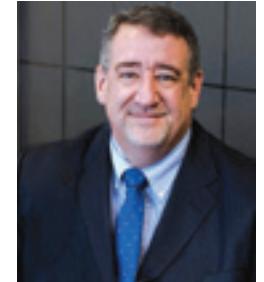
Perhaps preservation was in his blood, though, given he was born in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and was the son of Harry Pfanz, former chief historian of the National Park Service and Gettysburg National Military Park. He followed in his father's footsteps by spending 32 years in the National Park Service at Petersburg National Battlefield, Fort Sumter National Monument and Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park before retiring in 2013.

Pfanz authored or co-authored 10 books on the Civil War and was cited in many more. He received the American Battlefield Trust's Edwin C. Bearss Lifetime Achievement Award, as well as the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust's Ralph Happel Lifetime Achievement Award in Civil War Preservation. His work will not soon be forgotten, and the hallowed ground that he led the way to preserve is saved forever.

Don Pfanz passed away on September 2, 2025, from glioblastoma brain cancer at the age of 67.★

### ERIC WITTENBERG

*Champion of digital history and advocacy*

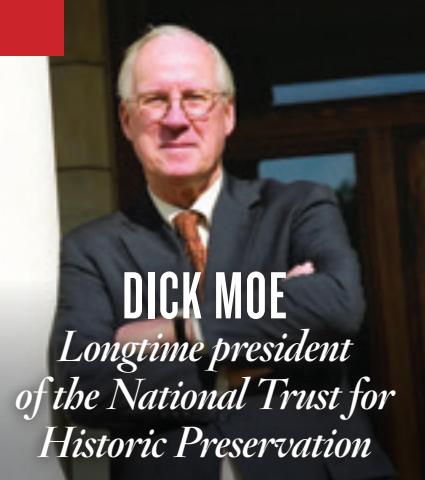


**E**RIC WITTENBERG was an acknowledged expert on the Union cavalry, particularly the Army of the Potomac, and was a prolific author – not just of books, but also of his blog, which was a pioneer in the area of digital history. He mentored young historians and was an early champion of the Emerging Civil War community, which has advanced the careers of many historians and preservationists.

Wittenberg attended Dickinson College in Pennsylvania, a short drive from Gettysburg National Military Park, and continued his education at the University of Pittsburgh, where he earned his Juris Doctor. He practiced law in Ohio following his graduation, concentrating on subjects related to his love of history.

Throughout his professional life, Wittenberg served as a member of the Central Virginia Preservation Trust Board, as well as being involved in similar organizations. A passionate preservationist, his scholarship and advocacy over the years were integral to the protection of Brandy Station and the creation of Culpeper Battlefields State Park.

Eric Wittenberg passed away following a two-year battle with cancer on August 2, 2025.★



### DICK MOE

*Longtime president  
of the National Trust for  
Historic Preservation*

**R**ICHARD "Dick" Moe was a devoted innovator of preservation and policy, evident in his longtime service as president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation from 1993 to 2009. His tenure at the organization is rich with preservation wins, including leading a coalition against Disney to protect Manassas National Battlefield.

A Minnesota native, Moe started his career in politics after graduating from Williams College but soon returned to the University of Minnesota Law School for his Juris Doctor while continuing his political work. From serving as an administrative assistant to the mayor of Minneapolis to working on presidential campaigns, Moe shaped American history before moving to protect it full time.

Published in 1993, Moe's book *The Last Full Measure*, about a Minnesota regiment at the Battle of Gettysburg, led to an offer to lead the National Trust, a role that combined his love of politics, law and history. His tenure was marked by a departure from the organization's dependence on federal funding, a crowning achievement that ensured the longevity and independence of the National Trust, as well as a broader, more dynamic preservation movement.

An advocate of small towns and communities across the country, Moe's dedication to strengthening local efforts helped save land from big-box stores and corporations and protected the quality of life and economies of at-risk regions. He leaves a legacy of dedication evident in the battlefields and structures preserved under his leadership.

Richard Moe passed away on September 15, 2025, due to complications from Parkinson's disease.★



Photo by NPS/J. TRACEY

## VIRGINIA NATIONAL GUARD

*Prepares for deployment at Cedar Creek Battlefield*



**NE HUNDRED SIXTY-ONE** years after the Battle of Cedar Creek, another military unit arrived on the battlefield in Frederick County, Virginia. Not to fight, but to build. The Virginia National Guard 1033 Engineer Support Company of the 276 Engineer Battalion spent two weeks on the Cedar Creek

Battlefield this past July.

The work, all completed on core battlefield land, consisted of constructing two new parking lots, a half-mile trail and a split-rail fence. Previously, no infrastructure was in place to allow easy access for park visitors, cutting off key parts of the battlefield from the public. While the National Park Service provided materials for the troops, the Virginia National Guard brought the equipment. Dozens of soldiers put in approximately 3,100 cumulative volunteer hours over the two weeks.

The work completed by the Virginia National Guard was majorly beneficial for Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park beyond providing access to critical parts of the battlefield. The projects were completed at a significantly reduced cost and at a faster pace than would have been possible without their assistance. National Park Service sites often need to compete for funding with other parks and historic sites, and the work by the National Guard soldiers eliminated that process, allowing for the work to be completed well in advance of the battle's anniversary in October.

"The park still has work to complete, including developing additional interpretive signage and some site work, before the area can be opened to the public," said Karen Beck-Herzog, site manager at Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park. "The plan is a soft launch this fall and a full opening in the spring."

The Virginia National Guard came to Cedar Creek as part of the Innovative Readiness Training Program, an initiative of the Department of War. The program aims to provide real-world training opportunities for

service members in a way that simultaneously benefits the community. Instead of building temporary structures for mission training, soldiers are able to offer a public good while developing practical skills. The National Guard unit that completed the work at Cedar Creek will be able to use their experience when they are deployed to build roads on missions overseas in 2026.

One of the parking lots and the split-rail fence were built on the former site of the Battle of Cedar Creek Campground, a 13-acre property the American Battlefield Trust purchased in 2018. Thanks to the support of their members, as well as the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation and the HTR Foundation, the Trust acquired the land and demolished nonhistoric structures on the site before transferring it to the National Park Service. The acquisition of the campground property allowed the Trust to reach the historic milestone of 50,000 acres saved throughout the organization's history. The tract figured prominently in the fierce fighting in October 1864, which gave the Union control over the Shenandoah Valley.

In the fall of 1864, Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan oversaw a string of Union victories in the Shenandoah Valley, including at Third Winchester, Fisher's Hill and Tom's Brook. By mid-October, Confederate Maj. Gen. Jubal Early was determined to strike Sheridan's army in its camps along the east bank of Cedar Creek. Early executed a surprise attack on the morning of October 19 and drove three Union corps from the field. As Early paused to reorganize, Sheridan arrived after a dramatic ride from Winchester in time to rally his troops and launch a crushing counterattack, from which Early's forces could not recover. Sheridan's victory at Cedar Creek extinguished any hope of further Confederate offensives in the Valley and was one of the Union victories in late 1864 that helped ensure President Abraham Lincoln's re-election that November. Today, the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park help tell the story of the battle to modern visitors, including trails that follow trenches built by Union troops.★

## RECENT PRESERVATION ACHIEVEMENTS

*Properties protected by the Trust, January–June 2025*

### Brandywine, Pa.

Fought on September 11, 1777, the Battle of Brandywine pitted the Americans, led by George Washington and rising stars Nathanael Greene and the Marquis de Lafayette, against British forces led by William Howe and Wilhem von Kynhausen. The battle had already been raging for hours when Howe's men appeared undetected on the Continental right flank and, despite stiff resistance, the Continentals were eventually overrun. A pivotal British victory, Brandywine cleared the way for the Redcoats to capture and occupy Philadelphia, forcing the Continental Congress to flee.

*In spring 2025, the Trust preserved nearly 15 acres at Brandywine in collaboration with the North American Land Trust, advancing our major initiative to protect*

*2,500 acres of Revolutionary War battlefield land to mark the conflict's 250th anniversary. The tract is associated with Washington's defensive line during the battle. The transaction was made possible thanks to funding from the American Battlefield Protection Program, Pennsylvania DNCR, Chadd's Ford, Pa. Township, the Welfare Foundation, the Longwood Foundation, and the North American Land Trust. The Trust has now saved 202 acres at Brandywine.*

### Chancellorsville, Va.

The Battle of Chancellorsville, fought April 30–May 6, 1863, was a resounding Confederate victory, but it came at a great cost. After his triumphant flank attack on May 2, Lt. Gen. "Stonewall" Jackson was shot by his own troops and died eight days later.

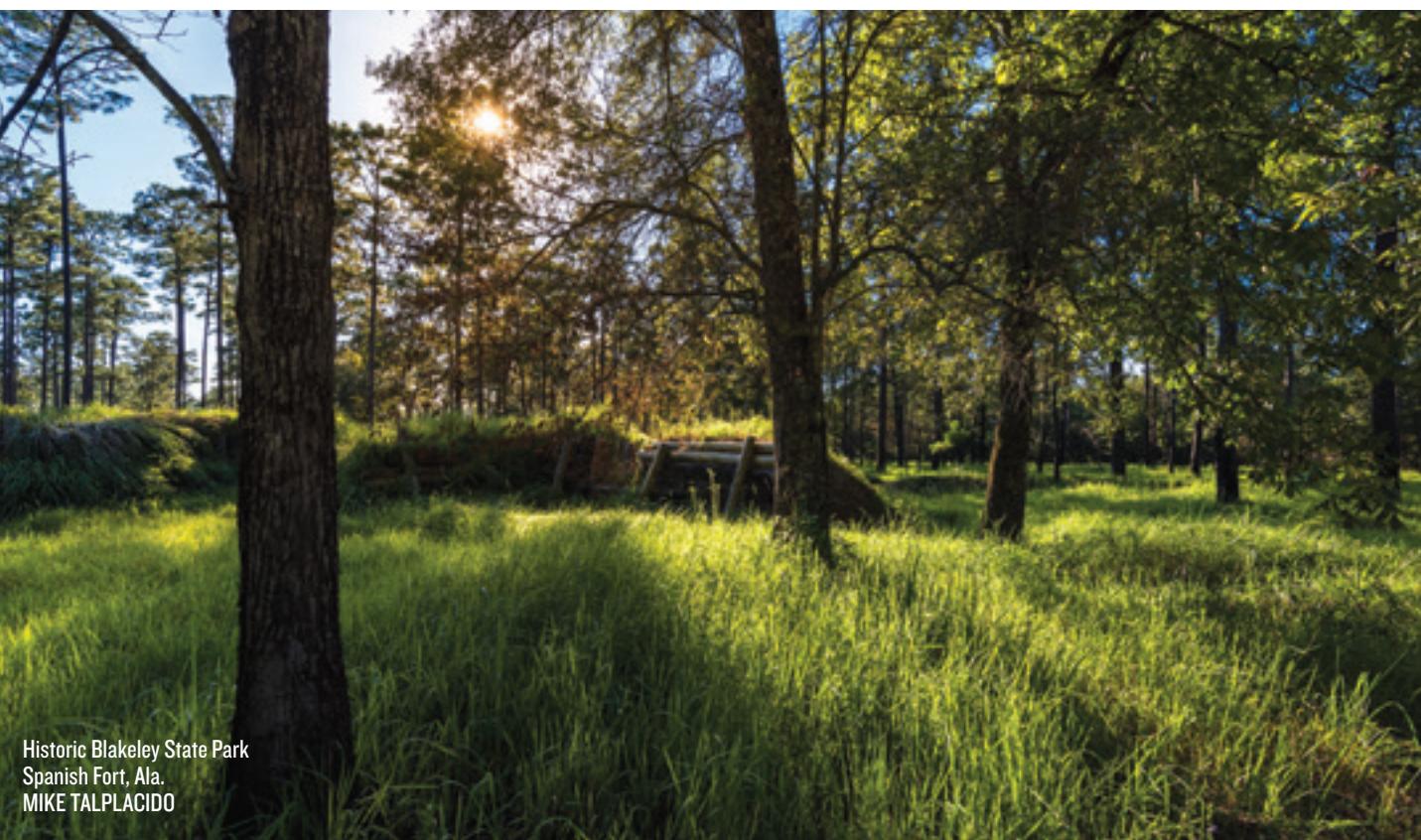
*In summer 2025, the Trust acquired*

*nearly 18 acres at Chancellorsville. The tract is associated with Jackson's Flank Attack. The transaction was made possible thanks to funding from the American Battlefield Protection Program and the Commonwealth of Virginia Battlefield Preservation Fund. The Trust has now saved 1,276 acres at Chancellorsville.*

### Chattanooga, Tenn.

The Union Army of the Cumberland, besieged in Chattanooga, was dependent on a single supply line. Desperate to open a more direct route for food and reinforcements, they floated bridge pontoons past Confederate guards on Lookout Mountain and establish a bridgehead at Brown's Ferry on October 27, 1863. The resulting "Cracker Line" facilitated the men, food and supplies necessary for November's Federal assaults on Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge.

*Thanks to funding from the Tennessee Civil War Sites Preservation Fund, the Trust successfully acquired half an acre at Chattanooga where Union troops launched a failed attack to drive Confederates from Tunnel Hill. The Trust has now saved 436 acres at Chattanooga.*



Historic Blakeley State Park  
Spanish Fort, Ala.  
MIKE TALPLACIDO

## SUCCESS STORIES

### LAND SAVED FOREVER

#### Fort Blakeley, Ala.

Fought April 9, 1865, hours after Lee's surrender at Appomattox, this battle was one of the last major Civil War engagements. Union forces under Maj. Gen. Edward Canby stormed Confederate defenses protecting Mobile, overwhelming a vastly outnumbered garrison. About 3,000 Confederates were captured. The fall of Fort Blakeley, along with Spanish Fort's earlier capture, sealed Mobile's fate and symbolized the war's closing days.

*In February, the Trust acquired 88 acres at Fort Blakeley. The tract is associated with the siege and assault on the fort and was the site of a charge by one of the largest contingents of African American soldiers in any Civil War battle. The transaction was made possible by funding from the American Battlefield Protection Program. The Trust has now saved 214 acres at Fort Blakeley.*

#### Fort Heiman, Ky.

Constructed by Confederates in 1861 to guard the Tennessee River, Fort Heiman

was abandoned before Union gunboats seized the position in February 1862 during the Fort Henry campaign. Later fortified and garrisoned by U.S. Colored Troops, it became part of the Union's western river defenses, securing supply routes and regional control.

*In spring 2025, funding from the Commonwealth of Kentucky allowed the Trust to acquire a quarter acre at Fort Heiman, marking the Trust's first preservation story at the site. The Trust has now preserved 0.64 acres at Fort Heiman.*

#### Malvern Hill, Va.

On July 1, 1862, after a week of battles, Union forces halted at the James River and fortified Malvern Hill under naval protection. Gen. Robert E. Lee's disjointed assaults cost the Confederates 5,300 casualties without gain. Though victorious, Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan withdrew to Harrison's Landing, ending the Peninsula Campaign. Union dead were later cleared from the yard of Crew House so it could serve as Confederate Maj. Gen. John Magruder's headquarters.

*In February, the Trust successfully*

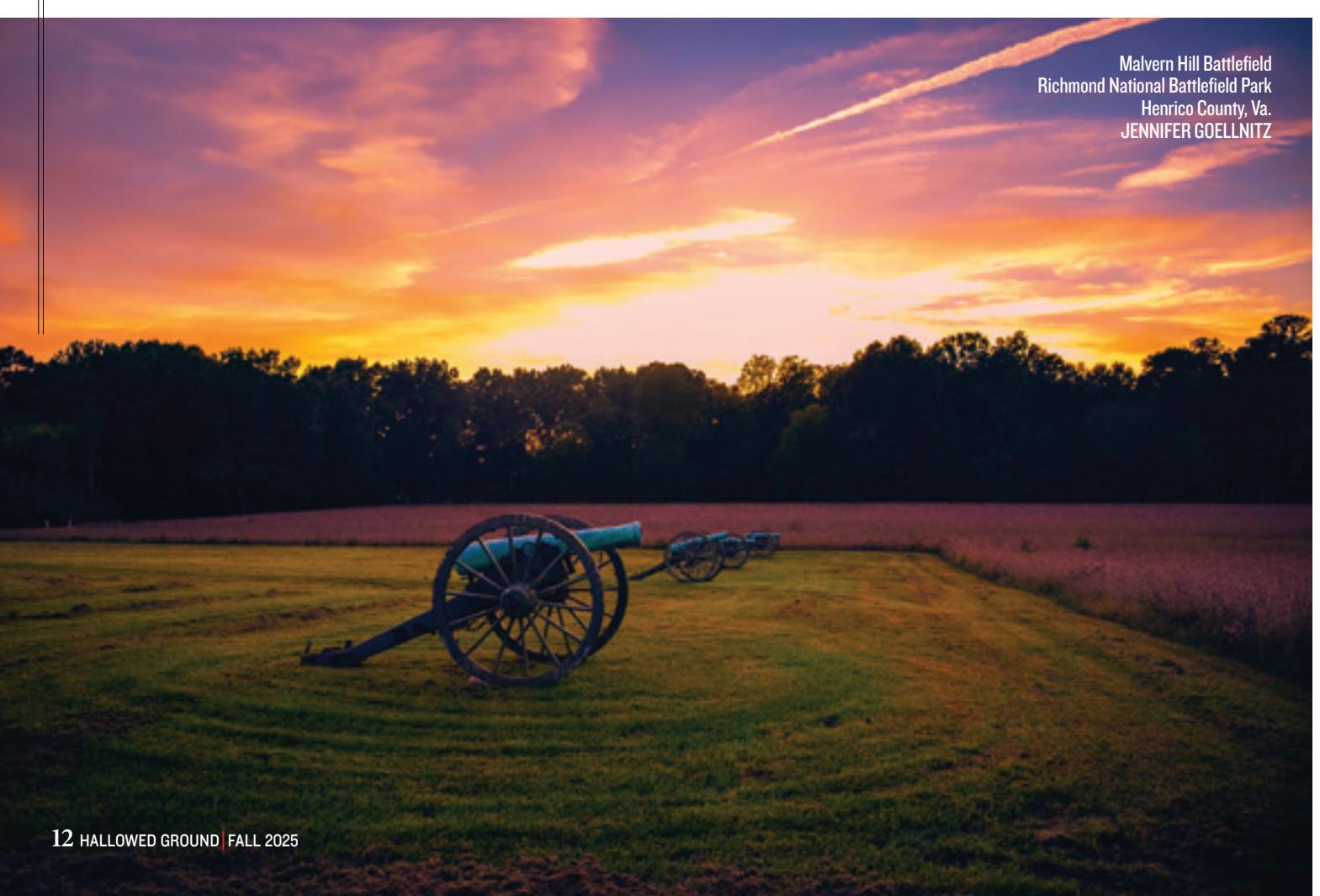
*acquired two acres at Malvern Hill that were threatened by modern development. The acquisition was made possible thanks to funding from the Richmond Battlefield Association. The Trust has now saved 1,452 acres at Malvern Hill.*

#### New Market Heights, Va.

At dawn on September 29, 1864, the Army of the James — including a significant number of United States Colored Troops (USCTs) — attacked the Richmond defenses. After initial Union successes, the Confederates rallied and contained the breakthrough. Lee reinforced his lines and counterattacked unsuccessfully the next day. The Federals entrenched, and the Confederates erected a new line of works, shifting troops away from Petersburg to meet the threat against the capital.

*Thanks to funding from the American Battlefield Protection Program and the Commonwealth of Virginia Battlefield Preservation Fund, the Trust was able to successfully acquire 34 acres at New Market Heights. The Trust has now saved 154 acres at New Market Heights.★*

Malvern Hill Battlefield  
Richmond National Battlefield Park  
Henrico County, Va.  
JENNIFER GOELLNITZ



## ANCESTRY

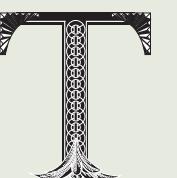
### HISTORIC CONNECTIONS IN YOUR FAMILY TREE



**fold3**  
by Ancestry

## A LEGACY ON THE LAND

*The Pamplin family's connection to Petersburg runs deep*



ODAY, Pamplin Historical Park preserves 424 acres at the heart of the Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield. For thousands of visitors each year, it is a place to learn about the Civil War and reflect on its legacy. But for Dr. Robert B. Pamplin, Jr., and his father, Robert B. Pamplin, Sr. — both men of vision and resources, whose success in business and philanthropy enabled them to purchase and preserve this land in the 1990s — the site holds even deeper meaning. Their gift was not only to the American public, but also a way of honoring their own family's story and its ties by bloodlines to both the home front and the front lines of the Civil War.

Both of Robert Sr.'s grandfathers served in the Confederate army and were connected to the Petersburg Campaign. John R. Pamplin, born in Buckingham County in 1830, enlisted in 1861, leaving behind a pregnant wife and two toddlers. A farmer by trade, he endured illness, repeated hospitalizations and even the amputation of a finger. Captured and released multiple times, his service reflected the harsh cycle of war for ordinary soldiers. His regiment, the 59th Virginia Infantry, fought at Petersburg, though John himself was no longer in the ranks by the time of The Breakthrough. Likely compelled by injury and the desperate needs of his family farm, he left the army in 1863.

His story illustrates the crushing choices faced by poor Southern farmers, who balanced duty at the front with survival at home.

William James Beville, born in Dinwiddie County in 1848, was barely 15 when he enlisted in 1863. His youth did not spare him — he fell ill during the Petersburg Campaign and was recorded absent, sick, in late 1864. The records do not clarify whether he returned before the war's end, but his regiment was present at The Breakthrough in April 1865, meaning he may well have

witnessed the final, desperate defense taking place in his own backyard. Beville lived in Dinwiddie County until his death in 1923, carrying his memories of boyhood service into the modern era.

Both men's surviving records, marked by enlistment dates, hospital stays and casualty notes, preserve only fragments of their wartime journeys. Yet together they represent the diverse faces of Confederate service in the Petersburg Campaign — journeys that, whether on the front lines or already ended by circumstance, ultimately closed with The Breakthrough.

Through William Beville's wife, Ella Boisseau, the Pamplins are also tied to the Boisseaus of Tudor Hall. Built in 1812 by William Boisseau and expanded in the 1850s by his son Joseph, Tudor Hall was more than just a family homestead — it was a working tobacco plantation that sustained generations of the family. During the Civil War, the Boisseaus were forced to leave their home as it was commandeered by Confederate forces. From late 1864 through early 1865, Tudor Hall served as the headquarters of Brig. Gen. Samuel McGowan and his South Carolina brigade, who manned the defensive line protecting Petersburg. On April 2, 1865, Union troops stormed across those same fields, breaking through Lee's lines in the decisive assault that became known as the Petersburg Breakthrough. For the Pamplins, this connection meant that their family history was bound

not only to the men who fought but also to the very house and fields that bore witness to the conflict.

For Dr. Robert B. Pamplin, Jr., and his father, protecting the Petersburg Breakthrough was more than philanthropy — it was both a tribute to their family's ties to the land and an affirmation of the battlefield's national importance. By placing the site in the care of the American Battlefield Trust, they ensured that its meaning would endure in perpetuity — inviting future generations of Americans to connect with this ground, whether through its significance to the nation's history or as a spark to discover their own.★



## PRESERVATION AT THE BREAKTHROUGH

### *Evolution of stewardship at Pamplin Park & beyond*

D

DO YOU REMEMBER the field trips you went on to museums or battlefields while you were in elementary or high school? Maybe it was a historic village or coastal fort, but it probably seemed like it was always there, just for trips like yours. Unfortunately, that's often not the case. Historic lands are continually changing, with preservation efforts that come and go. Every so often, though, an incredible steward of the land comes around and works the magic needed to make those field trips life-changing. Dr. Robert B. Pamplin, Jr., is one of those stewards.

After a failed assault by the Union army on Petersburg, Virginia, between June 15 and 18, 1864, the only way for General Grant's troops to take the Confederate city was to dig in and wait. And wait they did: The Siege of Petersburg lasted 292 days — from June 15, 1864, until April 2, 1865. The 10 months of seemingly endless fighting covered roughly 576 square miles, with worn-down soldiers making their homes in muddy trenches and seeing only incremental gains. While the siege eventually ended with a Union breakthrough that signaled the downfall of the Confederate army, the ground these men knew so well didn't move on with them. The land had stories to tell, and the storytellers came nearly 125 years later.

The American Battlefield Trust, then the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites (say that five times fast),



Pamplin Historical Park  
Petersburg, Va.  
JENNIFER GOELLNITZ

first acquired land in the Petersburg area in 1989. The first venture was fewer than 10 total acres, but it was the first step in a long and fruitful journey. In the Trust's research, staff realized that ancestors of Dr. Robert B. Pamplin, Jr., a businessman and philanthropist living in Oregon at the time, had owned the land during the Civil War, and contacted him.

Dr. Pamplin was thrilled at this opportunity, seeing it as a way to not only preserve the historic land, but also to educate the community. He bought the original 100-acre plot in 1991 and began restoration efforts, as well as construction on an interpretive center and trail. The Pamplin Park Civil War Site was officially opened in June 1994 with big dreams of what would come next. The plantation home of Pamplin's ancestors on an adjacent parcel was available for sale soon after, which the

Pamplin Foundation quickly purchased and began restoring to its Civil War appearance.

Over the next five years, Dr. Pamplin assembled a team at Petersburg, with the goal of transforming it into a world-class educational historic site. He brought in the right people — including former director of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites A. Wilson Greene. Greene was the person who'd contacted Pamplin about the original land and worked closely with the planning team as the park grew. He became executive director in 1995, when Pamplin Park would enter its most ambitious chapter yet.

The construction of the National Museum of the Civil War Soldier was completed in 1999, a crowning achievement for the still-young park. The 25,000-square-foot facility brings visitors face to face

with the nearly three million Americans who fought in the Civil War, as well as immersing guests in life-size dioramas and battlefield simulations. The museum tells the stories of more than just the leaders in battle; it tells the lives and highlights the heroic actions of oft-overlooked soldiers, civilians and enslaved people who were there.

The museum wasn't the only thing being developed, though, and Pamplin Park expanded to include the historic Banks House, General Grant's headquarters in April 1865, and surrounding land. Trails through the wooded areas continued to be built and maintained, leading visitors across the avenues of attack and along original Civil War fortifications. Dr. Pamplin's dream was becoming a reality as his park became a highly regarded center for education and interpretation, not to men-

tion a premier field trip destination for area schools and groups.

While Pamplin Park was growing, so was the American Battlefield Trust's work in the Petersburg area. Following the initial acquisition, the Trust continued to preserve land at The Breakthrough site directly adjacent to Pamplin Park and other important battle locations in the greater Petersburg area.

What started as a small plot became 439 acres by 2025 — a major success for not just the Trust, but also for all nearby parks and organizations.

The work between Pamplin Park and the American Battlefield Trust transformed The Breakthrough Battlefield, with both organizations sharing the goal of preserving and interpreting the stories the land had to tell. Starting in 2012, the Trust began a two-and-a-half-year project of restoring the 426 acres acquired at The

Breakthrough. This included removing a derelict hog farm and nonhistoric railroad bed and cutting 152 acres of timber from a mismanaged lumber operation and conducting controlled burns to reveal battlefield rifle pits. The work was far from over, as these efforts were matched by the replanting of native grasses and shrubs, installation of nearly two miles of interpretive and connective trails and restoration of wetlands through vegetative tree buffers.

The land began to resemble what troops saw in 1865, and soon the sounds began to return as well. The reintroduction of open fields and native plants, coupled with responsible wetland management, provided an ideal restored habitat for Bachman's sparrows and spotted turtles. Now, between the two parks, visitors could walk through original entrenchments on The Breakthrough Trail, complete with wayside exhibits and immersive audio messages.

In the summer of 2025, Pamplin Park was made available for sale to the American Battlefield Trust. While Dr. Pamplin had preservation at the forefront of his mind, the land itself was never formally protected. The land remains zoned for industrial and commercial development, and without the ironclad modern legal protections that Trust ownership can bring, it is at risk. Not even having been named a National Historical Landmark offers it any form of irrevocable protection. As open space across the region is gobbled up by warehouse distribution complexes and massive data centers, the painstakingly restored trails and monuments to acts of incredible courage are now facing an unknown future.

Fortunately, the American Battlefield Trust has the opportunity to protect this hallowed ground forever. Pamplin Park is already connected to the Trust's restored land, and this acquisition can create an 857-acre unified battlefield park to continue world-class education and interpretation, and through creation of the Breakthrough Battlefield Foundation, the National Museum of the Civil War Soldier continues seamless operations in perpetuity.

Please consider exploring the important ask for this massive undertaking and help us preserve this land that saw so many months of battle.★



by EDWARD ALEXANDER

PHOTO by CHRIS M. ROGERS

# BREAK THROUGH

*Nine months of fighting and siege led  
to this moment – the final, bloody push  
to take Petersburg and Richmond.*

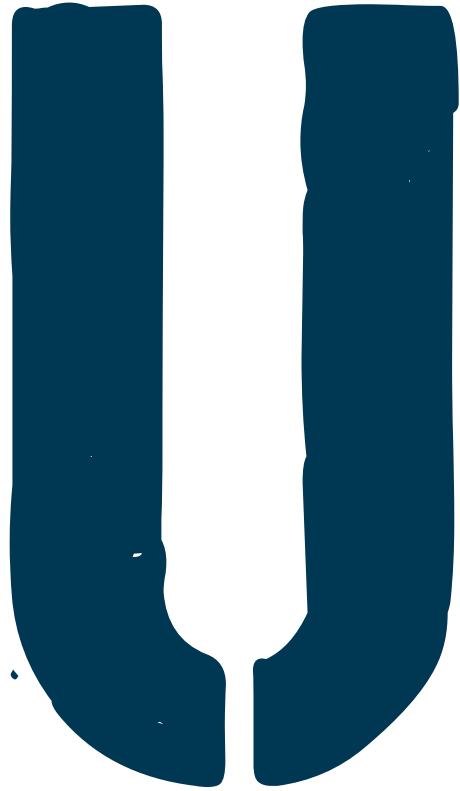
it met Hatcher's Run. The Union spring campaign called for cavalry and two infantry corps to cross that stream past the Confederate line and then turn west to cut the Boydton Plank Road. From there, they would continue onward to either cut the South Side Railroad — Petersburg's last direct supply line — or engage and destroy whatever force was sent to impede their progress.

Those who remained in the primary entrenchments maintained standing orders to assault the Confederate earthworks to their front should the Confederates weaken themselves there to reinforce other areas. Aware of that possibility, Lewis Grant scanned the potential battlefield for weak spots. His curiosity was rewarded with the discovery of a small ravine containing the headwaters of Arthur's Swamp, which pooled behind the Confederate works before gently meandering southeast toward the Union line. Grant informed his superiors, including corps commander Maj. Gen. Horatio Wright, that he believed this ravine was the key to the landscape. When Wright received orders on April 1 to launch an attack the following morning, he already had a working plan in place. Ten North Carolina and Georgia regiments manned the earthworks opposite Wright, and the Sixth Corps commander employed every measure he could fit into his orders to maximize the significant numerical advantage he already possessed. Using the cover of night and an artillery bombardment all along the Petersburg front, Wright deployed nearly the entirety of his 14,000 strong corps just behind his picket line.

The Vermonters centered this formation in the Arthur's Swamp ravine and were to use the terrain as a physical guide toward the Confederate line in their pre-dawn assault. Grant furthermore instructed his six colonels of secondary objectives for each of their regiments once they reached the Confederate position and encouraged them to share encouragement and specific roles with their own subordinates. The 5th Vermont Infantry, Grant's former command, had the honor at the front and center of Wright's wedge formation. Seven more brigades stacked up in echelon to the left and right of the Vermonters. Pioneer detachments were to precede the attack to cut gaps through obstructions. The storming columns were ordered to not pause and return fire, lest that arrest the momentum of the attack before it could reach its objective, which was to be carried at the point of the bayonet.

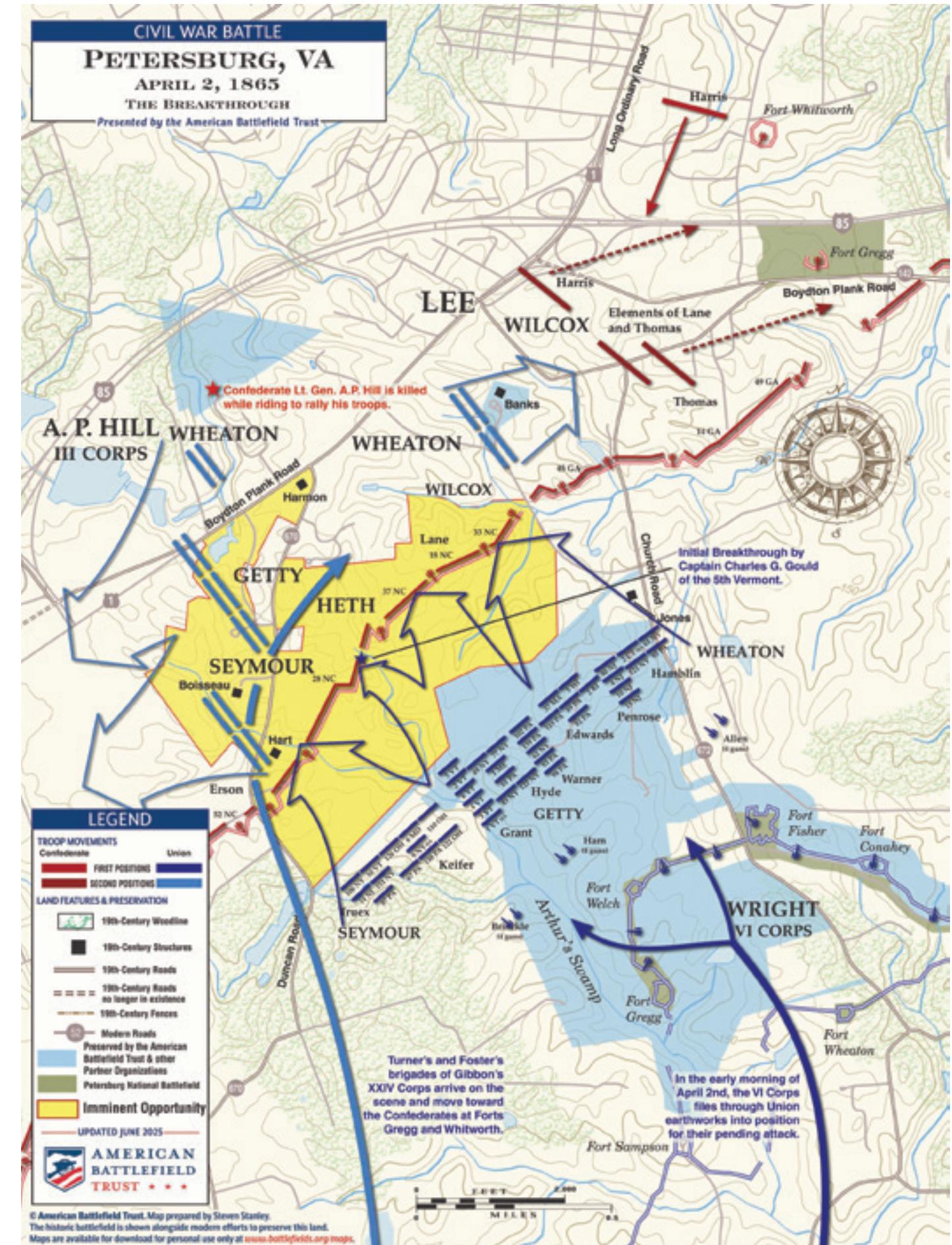
Despite Wright's best efforts to keep the pending attack hidden from the enemy, alert Confederate pickets sensed something occurring in the darkness to their front and began firing blind shots toward the massed bluecoat infantry. Union commanders prevented their men from giving away their position and intentions, but the force began suffering casualties with the attack still hours away. Two regimental commanders did not survive the pickets' fire and Grant, too, soon fell with a bullet wound to his head and was taken to the rear.

The signal gun fired at 4:40 a.m. After some brief confusion, the Vermonters sorted themselves out and rushed up the ravine to the Confederate position half a mile away. They swooped over the enemy rifle pits without pausing to stop and continued pushing onward. Company H occupied the left side of the Fifth Vermont's line at the head of the attack. A misunderstanding in the darkness caused them to veer up a secondary branch of Arthur's Swamp that did not fully continue to the Confederate line. Capt. Charles Gould paused in this defilade to gather as many of his men as he could immediately locate. Though temporarily safe from the enemy's fire, he determinedly rose up and pressed ahead. Reaching the Confederate earthworks and scaling its imposing wall, Gould suffered severely in intense hand-to-



RELATED TO THE ARMY CHIEF who shared his last name, Maj. Gen. Lewis Grant demonstrated tactical leadership often lacking during Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's year of combat with Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia. A Medal of Honor recipient for leadership under fire during the Chancellorsville campaign, the commander of the Vermont Brigade provided a welcome change of pace to the unimaginative sluggishness that characterized many of the previous attempts to capture Petersburg. General-in-chief Grant often delegated battlefield plans and decision making to his subordinates. The frequency with which they let him down would have justified a more hands-on approach, but no such meddling would be necessary on the Sixth Corps' front.

By late March 1865, Lee's army stretched itself out to protect 35 miles of fortifications. Union forces paralleled that wide front from Richmond down to Petersburg. The lines circled that city to the south and continued onward down Boydton Plank Road until



hand combat as the first man over the top. His company meanwhile raced forward to join him.



LEE



GRANT

Attacking waves on both sides rapidly expanded this breakthrough. Pushing further into the camps, they swung down line and rolled the Confederate position all the way to Hatcher's Run.

Lewis Grant rejoined his brigade during this latter phase of the battle with his head wrapped in a bandage. The confidence and clear instructions he provided his men from the planning stages onward likely influenced the outcome and overcame his temporary absence. A plausible "what if" scenario exists in which Company H and other Vermonters paused to return fire from vulnerable positions in front of the Confederate line. That tempting alternative to storming over fortifications with the bayonet could have contagiously stalled and minimized the impact of what has been justifiably deemed the most consequential attack of the Civil War.

Confederate Third Corps commander Lt. Gen. A.P. Hill held responsibility for the lines broken by Wright's men that morning. The lieutenant general had just returned to his post from medical furlough and kept his headquarters on Petersburg's western outskirts three miles from the assailed point. He spent a restless night listening to the widespread artillery bombardment and learned early in the morning of the Union IX Corps attack on the city's southeastern defenses. Saddling up ahead of his staff, he sped a mile and a half west toward Lee's headquarters at Edge Hill.

Hill learned along the way that his own lines were under attack, yet he lingered at the Turnbull House until a member of Lee's staff interrupted the discussion with an update on the severity of the Federal attack. Taking just four companions, Hill immediately rode south with the intention of reaching division commander Maj. Gen. Henry Heth's headquarters at the Pickrell House. He was unaware that post had already been evacuated, but evidence along his route suggested the futility of the attempt. The riding party paused to water their horses in Cattail Run, where they were surprised by a pair of Union soldiers who had ventured too far from the breakthrough.

Hill's small escort burst forward to protect the general, and one of them departed to lead their new prisoners back to Edge Hill. Shortly thereafter, Hill dismissed two others with instructions for a friendly artillery battalion he spotted parked along Cox Road. Only Sgt. George Tucker remained with Hill as he continued along Cattail Run. Tucker claimed the general acted strange as they observed Union soldiers in force along the Boydton Plank Road in the vicinity of the Pickrell House. Hill insisted on continuing the mission despite their presence. They rode up from the creek toward the road but soon noticed two Union infantrymen working their way out from the lowlands a bit further upstream.

Corp. John Mauk and Pvt. Daniel Wolford of the 138th Pennsylvania had participated in the successful charge that morning, crossing through the Confederate line just south of where Gould first struck it. The pair enthusiastically continued onward to wreck a few rails of the South Side Railroad before turning back to rejoin their comrades. They noticed the Confederate riders at the same time they were spot-

ted and took shelter behind a tree. Tucker spurred his horse forward to capture them. The Pennsylvanians replied with a volley, missing the courier but killing Hill instantly.

Accounts of Hill's death took their cue from Tucker, who depicted Hill as carelessly seeking out a confrontation. Hill's staff, however, suspected the courier crafted his story to absolve himself of responsibility for the prominent casualty. Several decades later, Hill's nephew claimed the general had vowed he did not wish to survive the fall of Richmond. That statement is frequently used to explain Hill's erratic behavior, but the theory relies solely upon a secondhand quote far removed from the scene.

It is possible that Hill myopically believed that the only way to save Petersburg and Richmond was to rally what he could of Heth's men. Determined to reach the division commander, the general gave little thought to his own safety. Circumstances dictated that he would not survive, but Hill's lack of concern for his own well-being — oft criticized as it is to this day — would be likewise demonstrated on April 2 by both army commanders.

U.S. Grant relocated his headquarters during the spring offensive to Dabney's Mill, south of Hatcher's Run, where he managed the different elements of the operation. He remained there throughout the night of April 1-2, maintaining frequent communications with key components of the plan: President Lincoln, his army and corps commanders, the cavalry further to the west who had just fought at Five Forks, as well as William Sherman and generals elsewhere throughout the south wrapping up active campaigns to bring an end to the rebellion. Early the next morning, he received news of Wright's breakthrough.

Grant looked to the relatively fresh Army of the James, positioned along Hatcher's Run, for the final push to close in on Petersburg from the west. Two isolated Confederate forts — Gregg and Whitworth — served as the only secondary defenses in the wide space between A.P. Hill's broken line and Petersburg's inner defenses. Four Mississippi regiments joined the hodgepodge garrison of artillerists and Third Corps refugees there. Throughout the afternoon they held the Army of the James at bay. Grant, with his staff, meanwhile followed on the heels of this force before settling into a temporary headquarters at the Margaret Banks House, less than a mile from Fort Gregg. He sat down at a tree north of the house and continued sending and receiving dispatches.

Confederate artillerists noticed the large retinue and began shelling the position. As they started to close in on the target, several of Grant's staff nervously encouraged him to seek shelter. The general ignored their pleas and continued his correspondence. Concluding a batch of messages, Grant stood up to assess the danger before ambling around to the other side of the house. Slight adjustments by the Confederate gunners would have significantly impacted what is otherwise recorded merely as an amusing anecdote about Grant's stubborn fixation on the task at hand. The Union commander's flippancy in the moment reflected his overall leadership style to put the bigger picture into place and trust that the smaller battlefield details could work themselves out.



Confederate fortifications after the Siege and Battle of Petersburg with chevaux-de-frise in the background.  
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

## HE ADVISED THEM OF HIS NEED TO ABANDON PETERSBURG THAT NIGHT, WHICH WOULD FORCE RICHMOND'S EVACUATION AS WELL.

Less than two miles away, Robert E. Lee was meanwhile losing himself in the minutiae. A.P. Hill's final military order had directed William Poague's artillery battalion to report to Edge Hill. Throughout the morning, these gunners served as the only organized force protecting army headquarters. Lee reportedly took time to ride among the batteries to offer encouragement and support. As Union infantry cautiously worked their way northward from the point of the Breakthrough, the Confederate commander spent a frustrating morning conversing by telegram with President Jefferson Davis and Secretary of War John Breckinridge. He advised them of his need to abandon Petersburg that night, which would force Richmond's evacuation as well. The politicians' response scolded the general for not giving them enough time to properly relocate the government from the capital. Lee furiously ripped that message to shreds.

The Confederate army commander planned to reunite the scattered refugees of his army at Amelia Court House, from where he would attempt to move into North Carolina and rendezvous with Gen. Joseph Johnston's army. The decisiveness of the Union victory

on April 2 enabled Grant to keep pace with Lee's withdrawal, preventing the Army of Northern Virginia from turning south. Issues of supply, marching routes and orderly evacuation from Richmond further hampered the Confederate retreat. Yet, while his opposing commander sent messages in all directions from his post under fire at the Banks House, Lee appeared to welcome the distraction of personally assisting in the defense of his own headquarters.

Famously, the Virginian had previously responded to crisis by placing himself under fire and assuming the role of a subordinate several levels below his role as army commander. These "Lee to the rear" moments from the Overland Campaign repeated themselves once more outside Petersburg. The general prominently remained among the artillerists as they contested the Union troops creeping toward Edge Hill. Staff officers begged him to seek refuge within Petersburg's inner defenses. Others boast that the commander was the last to leave the guns. These blurred lines of what constituted proper leadership on the battlefield perhaps kept Lee from focusing on the greater responsibilities that demanded his attention as the commander of an army clinging to its life. The decisive results of the Union attack on April 2, 1865, were the death knell of the Army of Northern Virginia; it survived just one more week until its surrender at Appomattox.★

*Edward Alexander is a cartographer and contributing historian with Emerging Civil War. He is the author of Dawn of Victory: Breakthrough at Petersburg, March 25-April 2, 1865, and has worked as a park ranger and historian at Richmond National Battlefield Park and Pamplin Historical Park.*



# FIELDS OF HONOR

*Thirty-one men received the Medal of Honor for their heroic actions at the Breakthrough on April 2, 1865 — the highest-ever concentration of such acts of valor. But that represented just one moment in their fascinating lives.*

by LAURA JOWDY

PHOTO of PETERSBURG BREAKTHROUGH  
by ROB SHENK



**THE PREDAWN DARKNESS** of April 2, 1865, some 15,000 Union soldiers gathered in their trenches outside Petersburg. After 292 days of siege, they were readying for a general assault, the largest to date, designed to pierce the lines and open the road to Richmond.

Thirty-one Medals of Honor were presented for this push, known to history as the Breakthrough. The Army's Medal was created by congressional legislation and signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862. As the only official military medal available at the time to recognize heroism in the line of duty, it became an object of reverence.

These are the intertwined stories of four of those Medal of Honor recipients at the Breakthrough: John C. Matthews, Robert L. Orr, Charles G. Gould, and Jackson G. Sargent.

#### JOHN MATTHEWS AND ROBERT ORR

John C. Matthews and Robert L. Orr both served with the 61st Pennsylvania Infantry. Both received the Medal of Honor for keeping the colors flying during the heat of battle when the color sergeant no longer could.

During the fighting at the Breakthrough, the color sergeant was shot down, so Matthews voluntarily hoisted the regimental and state colors. Orr, in command of the regiment, then took the state flag from Matthews. Together, they "ran along the line waving the colors, rallying the men for the last rush."

The pair's origins were disparate and ultimate fates divergent, but in through that remarkable moment, they are forever bound together.

John C. Matthews was born in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, in 1845, the eldest child of William and Susan (Brown) Matthews. He grew up on the family farm in East Mahoning, Pennsylvania, a rural community where the population has never exceeded 1,300 souls according to the U.S. Census. His future wife, Asenath Work, grew up in the same community.

Matthews may have gone by his middle name, Calvin, given the way his death was reported in local papers.

His family had a history of military service. His mother's grandfather served in Revolutionary War and his paternal grandfather served in the early Indian Wars and the War of 1812. Matthews himself served two enlistments during the Civil War: first nine months in the 135th Pennsylvania Infantry, then in the 61st Pennsylvania from December 1863 until his discharge at the close of the war as a sergeant.

Matthews married after the war and moved to Pittsburgh, to work as a clerk in the railroad business. At one point, the family rented a home at 365 Princeton Place.

He and his wife had five children, three of whom lived to adulthood. As the couple aged, they moved in with their adult children. Matthews' last address was at 470 Carroll Street in Akron, Ohio, the home of their eldest daughter Clara and her husband Rev. Dr. Orin Keach.

Matthews died there in 1934. For some time, it was believed that he was buried at Dayton National Cemetery in Dayton, Ohio, but further research has shown he is actually buried at Homewood Cemetery in Pittsburgh, alongside other family members. His Medal of Honor is in the care of the Soldier & Sailors Memorial Hall and Museum in Pittsburgh.

His rented home in Pittsburgh is gone. In its place is a row of modern triplexes. Similarly, the house in Akron has made way for a fraternal house associated with the University of Akron.

Robert L. Orr was born into a Philadelphia merchant family in 1836. A pattern of familial loss followed him throughout his life. He was only around five years old when his father, William H. Orr, died. The family dry-goods store at 158 N. 15th Street was left in the hands of his father's trusted storekeeper, an immigrant named Giacinto de Angeli, with the intent that it would pass to young Robert when he came of age.

By 1850, Orr was living with his paternal grandmother and aunt (both named Ann) while his mother and younger sister lived with maternal relatives. His mother, Justina, passed away a few years later in 1853. Orr's sister, Elizabeth, moved in with the paternal relatives from then on.

Orr first served a three-month term as a first lieutenant in the 17th Pennsylvania in 1861. After he was mustered out, he helped organize elements of the 23rd Pennsylvania, which was later redesignated the 61st Pennsylvania. By the time he left the service, he was a colonel.

After the war, Orr took control of the family dry-goods store, as



MATTHEWS



ORR

## TOGETHER, THEY "RAN ALONG THE LINE WAVING THE COLORS, RALLYING THE MEN FOR THE LAST RUSH."



intended. He married Mary T. Clemons, and the pair had two sons in three years before Mary died. By 1870, the Orr household on Winter Street in Philadelphia consisted of his Aunt Ann, his sister Elizabeth, his two sons, and a servant. Orr himself died in 1894; his last home of record was at 1740 N. 15th Street. He was laid to rest in Philadelphia's Lawnview Cemetery.

The traces of Orr's life in Philadelphia are no longer there. The dry-goods store, located on property that backed up to the historic Friends Meeting House, is now a modern expansion of the Meeting House called the Friends Center. The area where he lived in during the 1870s on Winter Street was mostly demolished in the mid-20th century to widen a nearby thoroughfare. His last home's location is now a parking garage for Temple University's basketball and event arena.

#### CHARLES GOULD AND JACKSON SARGENT

Charles G. Gould and Jackson G. Sargent both came from Vermont farming families. When Gould went first over the Confederate works, Sargent was close behind him with the national colors. After the war, Sargent and Gould spent weeks at a time within a few score miles of each other, but they did not cross paths again until 1913, brought together through the efforts of another Civil War veteran who offered up his home for the reunion.

Charles G. Gould lived on the family farm in Windham, Vermont, when the Civil War started. He left behind his parents, James and Judith, and two brothers to enter service as a 17-year-old private, rising to the rank of brevet major.

During his brave charge against the enemy at the Breakthrough, Gould suffered several wounds, any of which could have easily been fatal. He had passed through a narrow opening in the Confederate defenses, directly into the enemy lines. The Confederates, not taking kindly to the sudden appearance of this Union soldier, set upon him quickly. A musket fortunately misfired, but a bayonet pierced through his mouth and lower left jaw and a saber jammed into his upper spine. Somehow, Gould survived the damage and was able to retreat to the rear and report the need for reinforcements.

In letters home from the hospital two days later, Gould wrote that "the wound in my back is nothing at all as

it hit the backbone and stopped. The cut on my head is very slight and in fact all my wounds are ... I am feeling firstrate ... Don't worry about me for I never felt so well in my life." His was "only sorry that I was wounded before I got to Richmond."

Following the war, he was offered a position as a clerk at the U.S. Pension Office in Washington, D.C., in part because of his heroic actions at Petersburg. He continued his civil service with the District's Water Registrar and the U.S. Patent Office, where he retired as principal examiner.

During that time, Gould attended Columbian University (now George Washington University) and married twice. His first marriage in 1871 was to Ella Cobb Harris of Vermont, with whom he had two daughters. Sadly, all three had passed away by September 1890. He then remarried his first wife's cousin, Frances Lucy, in 1893 and had a third daughter, Margaret.

Gould and his family summered in Cavendish, Vermont, at Frances's family home at 2124 Main Street, well away from the bustle of the District of Columbia. When he retired about six months before

his death, the family made the move permanent, and Mrs. Gould purchased the home. Gould died in December 1916 and was buried at Windham Central Cemetery in Windham, Vermont.

Gould left behind a rather impressive physical legacy. His personal archives at the Special Collections Library at the University of Vermont; his uniform, pistol and Medal of Honor at the Pamplin Historical Park Museum boarding the Petersburg

## A MUSKET MISFIRED, A BAYONET PIERCED THROUGH HIS MOUTH AND LOWER LEFT JAW AND A SABER JAMMED INTO HIS UPPER SPINE...



Gould's Medal of Honor, awarded July 30, 1890.

Battlefield; and his last home in Cavendish still stands to this day.

Jackson G. Sargent was one of at least eight children born to Jeremiah Sargent and Sophronia Robinson. He grew up working his family's farm on what locals refer to as "West Hill" in Stowe, Vermont, according to Barbara Baraw of the Stowe Historical Society.

Sargent was 19 when he mustered into Company D of the 5th

Vermont Infantry. He served the entirety of the Civil War and mustered out as a lieutenant.

For years, there was debate about who planted the first colors on the Confederate works during the Breakthrough, but Gould, as the first through the works, put that speculation to rest in 1913 in a newspaper piece that gained wide traction. He wrote that, "I know, absolutely and positively, that before leaping into the works Sergt. Jackson Sargent joined me on the parapet with one of the stands of colors belonging to the 5th Vermont regiment, and I, therefore, feel justified in asserting that the colors of the 5th Vermont were first on the works."

After the War, Sargent returned to Vermont, married Carolina "Carrie" Harlow in 1866, and had three sons. His wife died in 1895; his eldest son followed her not long after. Sargent remarried, to Clara Slayton, in 1899.

He took up farming in and around Stowe, at one point running a farm in Hyde Park, about 12 miles north of his birthplace. He was back in Stowe by 1920 and told the census taker he lived on a dairy farm, even though his address on Maple Street sat up against a mountainside on the main road through town and was clearly not big enough for such an operation. Sargent died there in 1921 and was buried in River View Cemetery in Stowe. His home on Maple Street still stands.

WHEN THE CONFLICT ENDED, each of these soldiers went home to their families, their jobs and their everyday existence. They built lives. Maybe the memories of their time in war replayed for them regularly. Maybe they never thought of it again.

But their legacy endures not only in their Medal of Honor actions, but also in the echo of the physical places they lived and walked and breathed and fought.

Orr's and Matthews' moment of valor occurred on land already preserved by the American Battlefield Trust; the Trust is currently raising funds to permanently safeguard the location of Gould's and Sargent's.

Merchant. Farmer. Railroad Clerk. Pension Examiner. All also soldiers during the Civil War. And their legacies all deserve protection.★

*Laura Jowdy is the Medal of Honor Historian and Senior Director of Legacy Programs at the Congressional Medal of Honor Society. She holds a B.A. in history from Hiram College and an M.L.I.S from the University of South Carolina.*



The sword Gould carried into the Confederate fortifications (seen in the painting opposite). He dropped his pistol prior to the charge. It was later found and is in the collection of Pamplin Historical Park.



# THE ONLY EASY DAY WAS YESTERDAY

by EDWARD C. BYERS

MEDAL of HONOR RECIPIENT  
WAR ON TERROR | AFGHANISTAN

*Lives can change in an instant. Edward Byers knows this better than anyone — and so did Charles Gould 160 years ago.*

PHOTOGRAPHY by CHRIS M. ROGERS





**GREW UP** in northwest Ohio, in a town of fewer than 1,000 people where everyone knows everyone. My father was a Navy veteran of World War II, and patriotism, sacrifice and citizenship were really big in our family. In middle school during the '90s, I watched the First Gulf War on television and was drawn to the military, to doing something greater than myself. I was fascinated by books and movies about the Navy SEALS, individuals who could deploy in an instant anywhere in the world to do a very hard, specific mission using incredible technology.

I joined the Navy in 1998 and started my career at Camp Lejeune. Even then, I wanted to be a SEAL, and the Marine Corps was the closest I could start, so I trained as a hospital corpsman. I went on my first deployment to the Mediterranean in 2000, and that's when the USS *Cole* blew up, but it was just a precursor, a foreshadowing, to what happened just a year later.

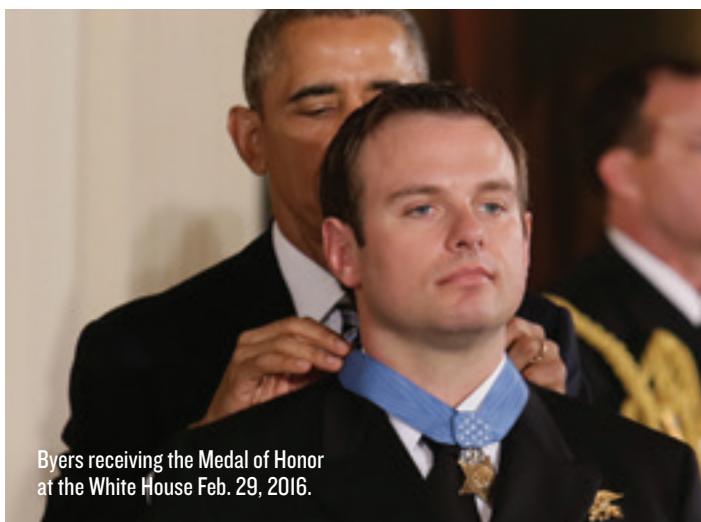
Shortly after September 11, 2001, I got my orders to go to BUD/S, Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL Training. The Naval Special Warfare community, the Navy SEALS, are recognized around the world as having the hardest military training in existence: It isn't just Hell Week; if you survive that, there are another five and a half months to go. We started with nearly 200 carefully selected recruits, but only about 20 graduated in Class 242.

It is really hard to describe how much of a suck-fest that training is, testing every component of who you are. It tests your mind; it tests your spirit, your will; it tests your body. It strips away your selfishness and puts the focus on the group. When everything is on the line, you have an almost foolish sense of trust that the person to your left and your right is going to be with you, no matter what is at stake. And you only get that by going through something incredibly severe.

I'm not sure there was anyone other than my best friend who thought I was capable of completing it. But you don't know truly what somebody's capable of until you watch them walk this path with an unrelenting pursuit of a passion. When you truly want something extraordinary, it has to be something that consumes all of you, because it demands all of you.



Byers, in uniform, during one of his deployments.



Byers receiving the Medal of Honor at the White House Feb. 29, 2016.

## THE ENTIRE TIMEFRAME FROM WHEN WE DECIDED TO EXECUTE ON THE TARGET TO THE TIME WE WERE ON OUR WAY HOME WAS UNDER 30 MINUTES.



JOSEPH



CHECQUE

But it wasn't until the end of my second deployment to Iraq, in April 2007, when the absolute reality of combat hit me. We were about a month from going home when there was an operation that changed the whole dynamic. In that operation, my dear friend Clark Schwer was killed; Mike Day was shot 27 times but got himself back to the helicopter. That day was a catalyst for why I ended

## CHAIN OF EVENTS IN DECEMBER 2012 LAGHMAN PROVINCE OF EASTERN AFGHANISTAN



up going for Naval Special Warfare Development Group, an even more elite unit often called SEAL Team Six.

May 2011 saw the proudest moment of my career, taking part in the Bin Laden raid. But that was swiftly followed by tragedy in August 2011 — the Downing of Extortion 17, the greatest single loss of life in special operations history. In a moment, 30 Americans, a military working dog and eight Afghans were killed, tearing a giant hole in our command, in our community. Beyond the grief, officials had to reconstitute that troop, and I was one of a handful of men from different squadrons moved to compensate.

About a month into deployment, once we'd reconstituted, we began tracking the kidnapping of American physician Dr. Dilip Joseph by the Taliban. Victims were being used to trade for the release of Al-Qaeda or Taliban members being detained by the U.S. government. When word came that he was going to be moved into Pakistan, where he might be imprisoned for years, executed or simply vanished, we decided to execute on the operation.

The night of December 8 was very cold in the mountains. And at the compound we were targeting there was an illumination risk because moonlight in the valley could reveal silhouette movement across a long distance. So we landed about three or four hours outside the compound, and our reconnaissance guys made a trail to the top of the mountains and down the steep backside. We had night vision on, but it was slow going; by the time we were in place, we heard the call to prayer come out over the valley and sunrise peek over the ridges. We had to decide in an instant: turn back or execute immediately.

We went. Nick Checque led our team out, and I was right behind him. As we approached the building where we thought the doctor was, one of the guards came out to start his day. Nick engaged him and started sprinting toward the building, with us all on his heels. Shots had been fired, and we needed to get into the building fast, so we could make sure the doctor was alive. The unusual

door to the building delayed us, but then Nick started to move through. I was right behind him. I heard more shots, and then I stepped over a body. Nick. Down the hall I saw a Taliban guard had an AK-47 about three-quarters of the way leveled at me, but I was able to shoot him first.

There was movement across the floor, but I didn't know whether or not that was another guard or a hostage. I got on top of that person and saw they'd been going for a stash of weapons, but I didn't know why — perhaps it had been someone trying to move to escape. I was able to adjust my night vision and now knew this wasn't one of the potential hostages. Then the doctor spoke up so I could better assess the situation. I shot the person I was on top of and then leapt across the room to the doctor. I used one arm and my body armor to shield the doctor while I pinned one of the remaining Taliban guards into the corner and used my free hand to choke him as the rest of the team came in.

The entire timeframe from when we decided to execute on the target to the time we were on our way home was under 30 minutes. The time I was in the building conducting the clearance happened really fast, but there were multiple buildings — a whole team taking down the compound. And the reality of our story, the complexity and scope, became evident after the fact. There is no doubt in my mind that the incredible skill of our explosive ordinance disposal guy — covering through one window to take out the guy who is believed to have shot Nick as he stepped through the door — saved my life that day. If it wasn't for that precision shot in the most critical of circumstances, the same fate would have awaited me, and the mission might not have been a success.

As for the aftermath, we're very good at compartmentalizing. You're conditioned to fight in a certain type of environment, and you build up a hardness around navigating that. I'm not saying every scenario coming back home after deployment is sunshine and roses; we all have our difficulties. I relied a lot on faith beyond just war theory. I honor and remember those that we served alongside who are no longer with us, but I also tend to reflect on how incredible it was to serve with such exceptional humans. For myself, it would be a tragedy to have made it

through so much because of the sacrifices of others and to waste the gift of a next chapter.

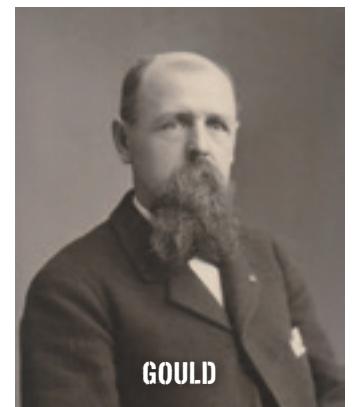
My Medal of Honor ceremony was February 29, 2016. I'd only been notified two months before, which isn't much time to adjust to how this will impact the rest of your life. The day itself was surreal. In his speech, President Obama noted it was probably the largest-ever gathering of tier one special operations in a formal environment. Only some of my colleagues and teammates were in the room, the ones able to be on camera or photographed; the rest were a floor below, watching on TVs. It was a striking juxtaposition between me being worldwide news, and this whole group of fellow soldiers who cannot be known because they do a job that very few of us can comprehend.

I'd only recently gotten the opportunity to meet a Medal of Honor recipient, Tommy Norris, a SEAL from Vietnam and a legend in our community. We talked about what life was like after the Medal, what to expect, some pitfalls and traps to hopefully avoid. From him and with the ceremony, I started to meet this brotherhood of Recipients and, through their citations, be humbled by the breadth of the military and what it represents.

In a figurative sense, the Medal is a heavy burden. I think of that every single time I put it on — how I didn't earn this by myself. I think about my friend Woody Williams from Iwo Jima, who, for 70 years, wore that Medal on behalf of this nation and promoted its values. To carry that responsibility for decades upon decades is no small thing. I think about Recipients from earlier conflicts too, especially when I've been able to visit the places where they fought — Joshua Chamberlain and his Soul of the Lion on Little Round Top at Gettysburg. Or Charles Gould, when he broke through the Confederate lines here at Petersburg.

Standing at such a place of connection, I can feel parallels in so

Byers on the actual earthworks where Charles Gould became the first to break through the enemy line at the Battle of Petersburg. For this action, Gould would receive the Medal of Honor.



much of Gould's experience. These are the earthworks he went over by himself ahead of his unit. He suffered multiple wounds in hand-to-hand combat: bayoneted through the mouth and cheek, clubbed by muskets, stabbed again. In modern combat, with our technologies and weapons systems, hand-to-hand combat is very rare, but as with me, it does happen. Adrenaline running extremely high can dull your senses to pain and provide overwhelming strength. Anything not geared toward you surviving in that moment does not enter into your psyche. I can imagine that feeling for him and how he used his instincts.

# C

**HARLES GOULD** is absolutely a hero. Courage is knowing that something bad can happen to you and you still go ahead and do it anyway. Because of a serious childhood injury, he didn't walk until he was six. He knew pain and recovery firsthand. But he volunteered for the Army, willing to make the ultimate sacrifice if required. And at 20 he burst over these works, ahead of everyone.

There are six traits to the Medal of Honor: sacrifice, integrity, patriotism, courage, commitment and citizenship. I believe the citizenship component is last because it signals the closing of a chapter. It was the greatest honor of my life to have served our country, but then what's next? Charles Gould ended his military career and went back into civilian life, as is supposed to happen. But his idea of service wasn't done. He lived another 50 years and gave back to his country in different ways, working in the Pension Office and the War Department as a clerk, and ultimately in the Patent Office.

In the SEAL community, we say you have to "earn your Trident" every day. Wearing the Medal upended my career path, but it gave me the incredible opportunity and platform to start a veterans charity called The Untold Journey Foundation, where we help support tier one special operations. If it wasn't for this Medal, I would never have spoken about the things I've done; because of it, I'm able to talk about some of the sacrifices and give praise to a group that is deserving of it, but would never want it.★

Visit the Breakthrough site with Ed Byers to see the battle through his eyes, and explore the parallels between his story and Charles Gould's experiences in the newest video of the Brothers in Valor project.



Gould photo courtesy DEBBIE ROLLINS, descendant of Charles Gould.

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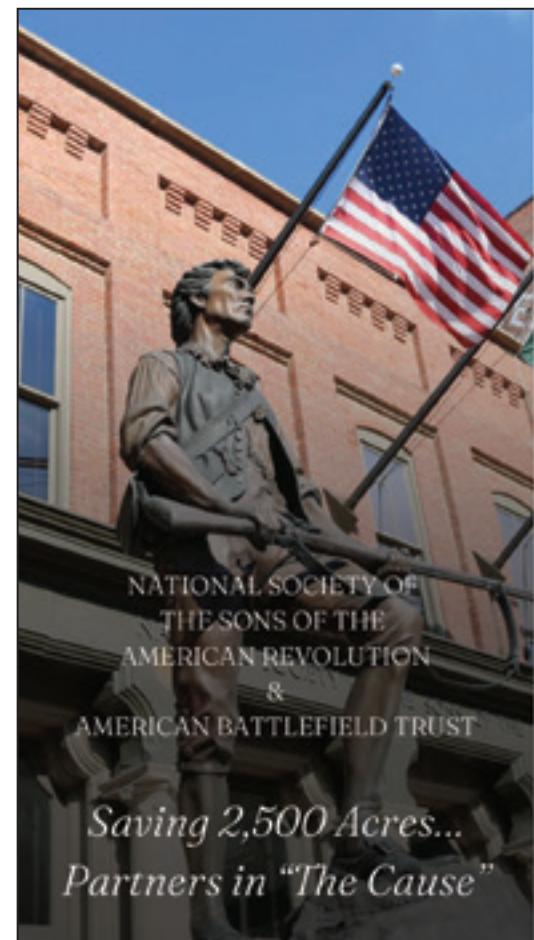
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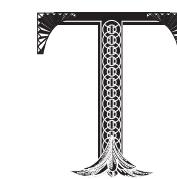


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Having an ancestral connection or our nation's revolutionary era, the SAR is a collegial organization whose mission is to further the founding ideals. As a hereditary society, our members are connected through a shared sense of honor, privilege, and responsibility to perpetuate the "cause" of the founders to create an independent nation of free people.

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HE SIEGE OF PETERSBURG lasted nine and a half months, from June 1864 to April 1865, and evidence of the sprawling military maneuvers that occurred during that time is preserved across south-central Virginia by numerous organizations. The National Park Service is on that list, with Petersburg National Battlefield showcasing the evolution of this land from a plantation maintained by enslaved workers through to its role in the siege.

Established as the Petersburg National Military Park in 1926 by the Department of War, the park preserves and interprets the battlefields, landscapes and military complexes tied to Civil War-era activity. Included in this rich history are Grant's Headquarters at City Point, where General Grant's 1864 log cabin and the preexisting Appomattox Plantation served as his office for the Petersburg Campaign. It is also home to the Eastern Front Visitor Center, which provides insight into the intensity of the fighting at Petersburg, as well as a glimpse into life in the trenches during the siege.

Given the campaign lasted 292 days and covered more than 3,000 acres, it can be challenging to see everything. This is where the park's 33-mile driving tour comes in. Three visitor centers throughout the park highlight 13 unique sites — the full-day experience takes you through the major conflicts at Petersburg, including Fort Stedman, The Crater, Poplar Grove National Cemetery and the Five Forks Battlefield. While the park is open, staff offer a variety of talks, tours and living-history demonstrations throughout the year that offer a deeper look into the events throughout the site. Make sure to check their website for updated daily schedules.

If you can't make it to Petersburg, the American Battlefield Trust has created a series of virtual-reality videos focusing on trench warfare in 1864. Step into the battlefield's history from home as you experience the lives of soldiers on the front line at Petersburg National Battlefield.

**PETERSBURG NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK**  
5001 Siege Road, Petersburg, VA 23803  
[www.nps.gov/pete](http://www.nps.gov/pete)



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