REMEMBERING THE SLAUGHTER AT SPOTSYLVANIA
MESSAGE from HEADQUARTERS

FREDERICKSBURG & SPOTSYLVANIA NATIONAL MILITARY PARK, Va.

Steve Razaar

Whether or not it was recognized, as such, at the time, the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House marked a shift in the nature of the Civil War. Certainly, the participants recognized that the fighting was fercocious, but did they nderstand that it would ultimately be recorded as the third-bloodiest battle of the war? Could anyone intuitt that Grant’s pledge to “fight it out on this line if it takes all summer” presaged the nine-month siege outside Petersburg? Union troops cheered when they left the Wilderness and turned toward the crossroads at Spotsylvania, rather than reversing course to Washington. But did they sense that they had been set on a course that would ultimately lead them to Appomattox and the war’s end?

For the past year, as the Trust has celebrated our 30th anniversary, I have asked a tremendous number of people whether they had any sense of what the all-volunteer group that began in 1987 would grow into. While many longtime members hoped that their effort would have an impact, they universally reported that the results we have achieved exceeded their wildest expectations.

Whether at the Annual Conference, the Grand Review or an internal staff meeting, I have thoroughly enjoyed sharing reminiscences of the past three decades in the trenches of battlefield preservation. We have engaged in one-upmanship on number of battlefields trampered and books read. We’ve compared notes on favorite tours — best guides and worst weather. We’ve given thanks for new friends made and fondly recalled colleagues and partners who we have lost along the way. I treasure all of the memories you have shared with me and hope that you will enjoy reading a selection of them in this issue.

As we head into the final days of 2017, I hope that you look back on all that we have achieved in these 12 months — and these 30 years — with a deep sense of pride. But, more importantly, I hope that you look ahead with great eagerness to do yet more in 2018 and consider making a gift to set us on a path to future success and meet your own charitable goals.

Your year-end contribution will enable us to secure additional historic tracts like the one we celebrated protecting at Brandon Vine in September. It will allow us to bring classrooms full of schoolchildren on field trips to historic sites, enriching their educational experiences. It will help us broker win-win solutions that balance development and preservation and take advantage of government matching grants. It will help us restore battlefields to their wartime appearances and host once-in-a-lifetime events.

After all, what we are able to achieve together moving forward will become the memories we fondly share at gatherings during our next milestone anniversary!*

Jim Lightner
President, Civil War Trust

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Warfare in Winter

BAD WEATHER and impassible roads made the Winter a difficult time for 19th- and 19th-century armies. Military leaders during this period — including the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the Civil War — tried to avoid operations during this trying season. Even when not on active campaign, soldiers struggled against the weather and the boredom of life in winter quarters, as they sought to bring some semblance of home and comfort to the holiday season. And, of course, there were those rare instances in which Americans had to wage war against the enemy and the elements. Explore the battles and activities that carried soldiers through the bleak months at www.civilwar.org/winter.

Find Us on Facebook

We continue to explore new ways to engage our social media fans through Facebook Live broadcasts. Together we visit historical sites, speak with subject matter experts, view cool artifacts, and interact with our viewers at home. Join our growing community to tune into upcoming virtual events at www.facebook.com/CivilWarTrust.

YouTube Channel

All our videos and animated maps are now in one place on YouTube! Watch our various video series on the key battles, personalities, and places from the Civil War, Revolutionary War and, now, the War of 1812. Join our thousands of subscribers at www.youtube.com/CivilWarTrust.
FROM THE TRENCHES
BREAKING PRESERVATION NEWS

PHOTOS ABOVE:
1) Representative Mehood. 2) Members of the 1st Delaware Regiment. 3) Ribbon-cutting ceremony featuring (left to right): Jeanette Spier (Chester County Planning Commission), State Representative Carolyn Comitta, John Corbalis (Birmingham Township Board of Supervisors), Terence Flaherty (Chester County Conservancy), U.S. Representative Patrick Meehan, and Rep. Mehood.

3) Representative Ryan Costello, Michelle Kichline (Chester County Board of Commissioners), Jim Lighthizer (Civil War Trust), Molly Mitchell (Historical Landmarks), Andrew Outten, (Brandywine Battlefield Park Association), David Shidlo (Brandywine Conservancy), and Andrew Outten, Director of Education at the Brandywine Battlefield Park Association.

BRANDYWINE COMMUNITY GATHERS to celebrate preservation victory, opportunity

N GROUND WHERE George Washington’s troops narrowly escaped the British army’s grasp, historic preservationists and land conservatists came together on September 15 to celebrate protection of a key part of the Revolutionary War’s Brandywine Battlefield, U.S. Congressmen Patrick Meehan (R-PA) and Ryan Costello (R-PA) joined Chester County officials, Campaigns 1778 and the Brandywine Battlefield Task Force to celebrate the acquisition of the 10.4-acre Dilworth Farm, where elements of George Washington’s Continental Army fought a crushing British flank attack on September 11, 1777.

The project, which builds upon past work by local activists, marked the first time the American Battlefield Protection Program’s (ABPP) Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants, which are funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund and administered by the National Park Service, have been used at a Revolutionary War Battlefield in Pennsylvania.

“Over the years, it has been wonderful to see so many partners coming together to preserve portions of this beautiful and historically significant battlefield,” Representative Meehan told attendees at the news conference. “This hallowed ground needs to be preserved as an outdoor classroom, so future generations can understand the sacrifices our founding generation made.”

“The Land and Water Conservation Fund provides states and localities with the necessary resources to successfully implement conservation and historic preservation efforts, including the American Battlefield Protection Program,” said Representative Costello. “In southeastern Pennsylvania, conservation and education efforts create an important partnership in preserving open spaces for future generations to understand our history.”

To cap Friday’s ceremony, stakeholders cut a ceremonial ribbon denoting the battlefield’s preservation, and members of the 1st Delaware Infantry Regiment fired a musket volley to honor the soldiers on both sides who fought at Brandywine. The event kicked off two days of large-scale living-history events celebrating the battle’s 240th anniversary.

“Today’s announcement is a culmination of years of work done in partnership with the National Park Service to identify the most significant parts of the Brandywine Battlefield that are of the highest priority for preservation,” Trust President Jim Lighthizer said. He went on to thank Chester and Delaware Counties, the Brandywine Conservancy, Birmingham Township and all the townships and residents in the area for their collective hard work to preserve the Brandywine Battlefield over many years.

Michelle H. Kichline, chair of the Chester County Board of Commissioners, noted that the Dilworth Farm’s preservation adds to approximately 400 battlefield acres that have been protected within her jurisdiction.

“None of the battlefield would be preserved today, if not for the work of the local community, partners and Brandywine supporters,” Kichline said. “Although Chester County has invested roughly $4.8 million in the preservation of the Brandywine Battlefield, it is critical to have support from the National Park Service through programs like the American Battlefield Protection Program, and from all of our nonprofit conservation partners.”

Kichline highlighted the steadfast work of the Brandywine Conservancy on open-space and historic preservation issues. The Conservancy will hold the conservation easement for Dilworth Farm.

Molly Morrison, president of Natural Lands, then announced that her nonprofit conservation group is working with Campaign 1778 to safeguard 88 acres at Osborne Hill, utilizing a $1.13 million ABPP matching grant. “In addition to being a beautiful site of Chester County countryside, Osborne Hill is an important historic site from which British Gen. William Howe directed the movements of his army during the battle,” Morrison said. “We are pleased to have the opportunity to preserve this important property. A major grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program has brought us very close to realizing our goal at Osborne Hill.”

“Preservation of the Dilworth Farm expands opportunities at the battlefield for public interpretation,” and historian Andrew Otten, chair of the Brandywine Battlefield Task Force. “Of any battle fought on American soil during the Revolutionary War, Brandywine had the most combatants engaged — 30,000 — witnessed the most casualties and covered the largest area.”

Purchase of the Dilworth Farm property cost $850,000, paid for with grants from Chester County and the American Battlefield Protection Program, matched with private donations from the Civil War Trust. Once a conservation easement to protect this open space is recorded, Birmingham Township will take title to the property.

COLOR REVIEW RECAP
Color Bearers and Standard Bearers celebrate 30 years

COLOR BEARERS FROM ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY have come together for the annual Color Review. The event is held in recognition of the contributions made by the American Revolution. On Saturday, October 15, 2016, the Color Review was held at the Brandywine Battlefield Park, where the standard bearers gathered to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Color Review.

The Color Review is a celebration of the colors flown by the American Revolution military forces. The event attracts participants from all over the country, including veterans, historians, and reenactors.

On Saturday, October 15, the Color Review was held at the Brandywine Battlefield Park. Participants of all ages, including veterans, historians, and reenactors, gathered to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Color Review.

The event started with a welcome address from the park superintendent, followed by a reading of the colors and the presentation of the Color Bearers. The Color Bearers, who carry the colors of the American Revolution, were honored for their service and dedication.

The Color Review concluded with a parade of the Color Bearers and Standard Bearers through the park. The crowd cheered and applauded as the colors were carried through the park.

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CHARGING FLEETWOOD HILL

Generations event brings cavalry back to Brandy Station

T HAD BEEN 154 years since the stomp of hoofbeats and the clash of cold steel echoed over Fleetwood Hill at Brandy Station, where the largest cavalry battle in American history occurred on June 9, 1863. And when the horsemen rode again on September 30, they had a very special audience — some 200 guests taking part in a Civil War Trust Generations event specifically designed to introduce children to history.

About 80 reenactors participated in the charges across the historic landscape, a far cry from the 20,000 mounted troops in the original battle. But the event was notable for being the first time a living-history demonstration has been held on this site, which opened to the public in 2005 after the Trust acquired and restored the land to its wartime appearance.

The Trust began its Generations program two years ago as a way to help parents, grandparents and other adults share their passion for history with the children in their lives through appropriately immersive experiences. Gatherings — all of which are free to attend, but may require advanced registration — have previously been held at Antietam, Gettysburg, Manassas, Pamplin Historical Park and elsewhere. The Brandy Station event featured the largest number of reenactors to date.

Historian Clark B. "Bud" Hall provided commentary and explanation of the battle's significance, sharing how the ground attendees were standing on was the most fought-over spot in the entire Civil War. Twenty-one individual engagements were fought there, although the 14-hour Confederate Pyrrhic victory that kicked off the Gettysburg Campaign is the most famous. "You can track the decline of the Confederate cavalry after this," he said, "Stuart lost a ton of officers, troopers and horses that could not be replaced."

After watching the battle action unfold on Fleetwood Hill, the cavalry passed the crowd in review. Then, the children in attendance stepped forward to receive basic training in military drill, going so far as marching and executing several turns and wheeled maneuvers.

Next, guests adjourned elsewhere on the battlefield to St. James Church, where they were able to explore the camps that had been set up by the living historians. Here they could interact with soldiers and their mounts, learning about both everyday life in the 1860s and military history alike. Some children even received plastic sabers to learn the art of fighting on horseback.

"My granddaughter Bethany and I enjoyed every minute! She thought the cavalry action was in her words, "Amezaads." (High praise from an eleven-year-old)," wrote one participant. "Thanks to you and the Civil War Trust for making the Generations events possible. It has allowed me to share my passion for the Civil War with Bethany in a real way and has sparked a love in her for this critical time in our country's history."

Immersive experiences like this one are made possible by a generous gift from the estate of longtime Trust member Bob Brinley to fund the Cadet Conference. The 2018 slate of events is still taking shape, but look for on-site events at some of your favorite battlefields, digital events at other harder-to-access locations and new event styles but with the same laser focus on instilling a passion for history in younger generations. Learn more at www.civilwar.org/generations.

PHOTO LEFT: Last year, hundreds participated in Park Day around the country. Here, volunteers help at Antietam National Battlefield in Sharpsburg, Md.

SHARON MURRAY

PARK DAY 2018

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! Our 23rd annual Park Day will be held on April 7, 2018, at sites from Maine to California. Last year, an estimated 8,000 volunteers participated at a record-breaking 138 battlefields and historic sites, across 30 states and the District of Columbia. Registration is now open for site managers; visit www.civilwar.org/parkday to enroll. A full list of participating locations will be available online in February.

50 YEARS OF MARYLAND ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

N OCTOBER 12, state land conservationist leaders gathered in Annapolis to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET). In the past five decades, MET has placed more than $1.080 conservation easements on important landscapes across the Old Line State, permanently protecting some 134,000 acres of natural, scenic and historic significance in perpetuity. Among that land is more than 8,000 acres associated with the battlefields at Antietam, Monocacy and South Mountain. Active MET programs include: Land Conservation, Monitoring and Stewardship; Local Land Trust Assistance; and Keep Maryland Beautiful Grants.

Speaking to the crowd of more than 100, Gov. Larry Hogan praised the landowners who have voluntarily placed their land under protection from future development. "Our administration is grateful to conservation-minded citizens for their commitment to preserving land in Maryland. This is just one example of how individual Marylanders can play an essential role in safeguarding our state's most treasured places. Their commitment to protecting farms and forests, beaches and bays, and our state's natural and cultural resources benefits all Maryland citizens by helping ensure healthy local communities and economies, clean air and water and the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay."

PRESEVATIONISTS POISED FOR VICTORY AT PRINCETON

HE DECADES-LONG fight to protect New Jersey's Princeton Battlefield from invasive development near concluded this autumn, as the Princeton Planning Board approved the Institute for Advanced Study's (IAS) revised site plan for the Maxwell's Field area. The revised plan trades single-family homes for townhouses and enables the Trust, through its Campaign 1776 initiative, to purchase the most historically significant land under dispute.

"The approval of this revised plan by the municipality represents an important part of our agreement with the Civil War Trust and will help us move forward in the process to bring that agreement to conclusion," IAS chief operating officer Janine Purcaro told the Planning Board.

Final steps, however, remain before total victory can be declared. First, the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission must approve the revised design, including stormwater drainage infrastructure. And, perhaps most important, the Trust must complete its $4 million fundraising campaign to fully pay for the land.

Reflecting on the impressive compromise that was reached at Princeton, state senator Bob Kip Bateman (R-16), who had advocated for preservation, said: "I am confident that this project will not cause the catastrophic damage that we would have seen with the original plan," he said. "Although I will continue to keep a watchful eye on the construction, make no mistake — I believe our battle to save the battlefield has been won."

PHOTO LEFT: The Maryland Environmental Trust executive director William Lushy, Maryland Natural Resources secretary Matt Babin, the Civil War Trust’s Paul Cossineau, Maryland Environmental Trust Board of Trustees chair James Grena and Gov. Larry Hogan.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Maryland Environmental Trust executive director William Lushy, Maryland Natural Resources secretary Matt Babin, the Civil War Trust’s Paul Cossineau, Maryland Environmental Trust Board of Trustees chair James Grena and Gov. Larry Hogan.
Old Dominion continues leadership role in preservation

FIELD REPORTS
LOCAL PARTNERS AND ALLIES
Cold Harbor Battlefield
Richmond National Battlefield Park
Mechanicsville, Va.
MATTHEW HUNTLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES
Made at Lee’s Headquarters in Gettysburg

TUDORS IN Prof. Benjamin Lyle’s Archaeology of Pennsylvania class at Gettysburg College had the opportunity of a lifetime this autumn, participating in the excavation of a historic building foundation on the Trust’s Lee’s Headquarters property. In the process, they made important discoveries that have deepened understanding of events from July 1, 1863, that have achieved somewhat legendary status.

The four-acre property acquired by the Trust in 2015 and subsequently restored to its wartime appearance through the demolition of a hotel complex famously known the Mary Thompson House. But the portion of the parcel on the opposite side of the Chambersburg Pike had once been the site of another home, leased from Thompson by Alexander Riggs and family at the time of the battle, but torn down in the 1950s.

The Riggs House figures into the legend of John Burns — the 69-year-old War of 1812 veteran who took up his powder horn and musket to fall in with the Iron Brigade, serving as a sharpshooter in the McPherson Woods on July 1. Wounded several times, Burns was left behind by retreating Union troops but managed to discard his weapon and convince the advancing Confederates that he was a non-combatant; who had been caught in the crossfire. According to legend, the wounded Burns crawled to the closest house, but the Riggs family had evacuated the battle — was not there to take him in. He collapsed against the cellar door.

After the Trust acquired the Lee’s Headquarters property, historians from the Adams County Historical Society (ACHES) suggested a scan of the parking lot at the Riggs House site with ground-penetrating radar. This process indicated the remains of a building’s foundation underneath the asphalt, and plans for a formal investigation began to take shape.

The excavation that began in August was a cooperative effort of the Trust, Gettysburg College and ACHES, performed by students and volunteers. The excavations uncovered the stone foundations of the eastern wall of the farmhouse, including the location of the famous cellar door where Burns was found lying wounded during the battle. A brick patio was also discovered outside the eastern wall, which may have been covered with a wooden patio sometime after the battle.

A number of items — including a lady’s comb and pieces of pottery dating as far back as 1800 — were uncovered in the process. The majority of artifacts, however, date to the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century, with many of them found in layers of soil associated with the abandonment of the house.

After excavations were completed in late October, students turned their attention to washing and cataloging the artifacts. These will be turned over to the Trust — along with an official report and detailed maps showing the locations of the discoveries — in early 2018.

HURRICANES IMPACT
Historic sites on Atlantic, Gulf Coasts

NUMBER 1: National Park Service units with connections to the wars of America’s first century suffered damage during this autumn’s busy Atlantic hurricane season.

Hurricane Irma caused extensive damage at Fort Jefferson, a unit of Dry Tortugas National Park, where a 40-foot section of the most well-collapsed This island, located west of the Florida Keys, served as a military prison during the Civil War and was the site of the imprisonment of Dr. Samuel Mudd — who set John Wilkes Booth’s broken leg in the aftermath of the Lincoln assassination. A number of trees were also knocked down, and significant debris was deposited around the fort.

Significant masonry repair work at the fort had been ongoing, and conditions are being assessed. The park reopened to the public on September 28, although portions of the most well remain off limits.

In Charleston Harbor, Fort Sumter suffered near-record flooding from the storm, with four feet of standing water remaining within the historic area three days after the storm passed. In the aftermath, park staff carefully cleaned the site’s historic cannon to prevent erosion from prolonged exposure to the salt water. Although there was no lasting damage done to the Civil War portions of the fort, the dock and restroom infrastructure were in need of repair before the park could reopen on September 22.

Fort Moultrie was also temporarily shuttered due to heavy water, but received no lasting damage and reopened on September 14.

Port Pulaski was heavily damaged, and closed for a full month, not reopening until October 7. Even then, water was unavailable within the historic area and portable toilets replaced the damaged visitor center and latrines. Although the flooding experienced by the fort was dramatic, park staff took a historical view of the storm, pointing out on social media that the damage paled in comparison to the Great Sea Island Storm of 1893, which hit Savannah directly, breaking wind gauges that could have measured its wind strength, leaving more than five feet of standing water inside the fort and causing significant loss of life. In addition to contending with flooding, downed trees and scattered debris, park staff had to repair damaged water and sewer systems and rebuild bridges at the demi-lune and Cockspur Island that were destroyed.

Although it was undamaged in any 2017 storms, Gettysburg National Military Park played a major role in recovery efforts, contributing 20 staff members to the NPS Eastern Incident Management Team. This 311-person task force was made up of experts in conservation, cultural resources and野外 deployed from 88 parks in 33 states.

109: The freshly uncovered foundation, including cellar door location.
110: The Riggs House, located opposite from the Mary Thompson House, was demolished in the 1950s and renovated in 2017.
THIRTY YEARS OF MEMORIES

Members and staff share their favorite recollections

Ver the last 30 years, more than 200,000 people have contributed to the Trust and its predecessor organizations. Together, we have saved tens of thousands of acres, hundreds of buildings, and countless memories.

As we celebrated our millennium anniversary, the Trust invited members and friends to share their most striking memories of these decades in the trenches of battlefield preservation.

For Ron Jones, those memories stretch back further than for most others. “My family and I visited our first Civil War reenactment at Antietam in the 125th anniversary in September of 1987. We met someone from the APCWS (Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites). We joined the group on the spot just two months after it was formed. In 1990, I got our school, Our Lady of Sorrows, and Farmington, Mich., to join the APCWS, becoming the first school to do so.”

Twenty-seven years later, the school is still an active contributor, donating more than $100,000 since then.

Nor are schoolchildren the only long-term learners who have taken advantage of Trust activities. Tim Rampion belongs to a study group that spends a year preparing for a capstone tour of a battle or campaign. “And this year will be our 27th trip — to Gettysburg for the third time. On our first trip in 1991, we spent an afternoon with [APCWS’s first executive director] Will Greeen at the Battle of the Wilderness. Supporting the Civil War Trust in its preservation efforts is one of the most satisfying things I do.”

Satisfaction and pride were common refrains for those characterizing their feelings regarding membership. But Linda Martinez’s go even further. “If I was asked to express my collective feeling about my relationship with the Trust, it would be joy! The joy of going to my mailbox and seeing another one of our mailings in it and then getting to read about another opportunity to save ‘hallowed ground’ as an environmentalist, I get to do my part in helping preserve another glorious expanse of nature. A history buff since childhood, when I see the dates 1778, 1812, 1861, it doesn’t take much to put my pacifism on hold to save the site so that future generations can learn the why and the how of who and what we are!”

For many members, the most meaningful opportunities to protect land are those that allow them to honor the memory of an ancestor. “My great-grandfather was in the 4th New York Cavalry and was wounded in a skirmish at Brandy Station in October 1863,” wrote Eugene Gronberg. “Going there with my son and walking the ground, it felt good to look around and think he may have seen the area in a similar way that we did. These places are important to preserve.”

But even those far removed from the battelfields them-
WITH more than 150,000 troops engaged and some 30,000 casualties inflicted during almost two weeks of combat, the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House signaled that the very character of the Civil War in the Eastern Theater had changed.

On May 7, 1864, as the smoke still lingered over the battlefields of the Wilderness, Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant issued orders for the Army of the Potomac to march toward Spotsylvania Court House, a small town along the route to Richmond. He hoped to get between the Confederate army and its capital or, at the very least, to draw Gen. Robert E. Lee into the open field, where he could take advantage of superior Union numbers. A division of Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart’s cavalry stood in the way, blocking the direct route along the Brock Road against Federal passage. Sharp mounted fighting occurred at Todd’s Tavern, with the next two days. On May 9, he sent a portion of Maj. Gen. Winfield S. Hancock’s II Corps across the Po River in an effort to find Lee’s left flank. Spring Hancock’s move, Lee shifted two divisions to counter the Federals at Black House Bridge, forcing the Yankees back across the river. Grant spent the next day probing Lee’s line for weaknesses and briefly breached the Confederate line with a tightly packed, fast-moving column of regiments.

By May 12, the Confederates had established a long line of earthworks, including a half-mile-wide bulge called the Mule Shoe Salient, opposite which Grant amassed 20,000 men. Lee noted the Federal movement, but mistakenly believing Grant was preparing to withdraw, 

Union eventually forcing a Confederate withdrawal to a rise of ground known as Laurel Hill, the last defensible position before Spotsylvania. Fortunately for Lee, help was near at hand. Maj. Gen. Richard Anderson — now in command of Maj. Gen. James Longstreet’s First Corps — had marched through the night. His men had just entered house at about one hour before dawn.

Believing Spotsylvania to be within his grasp, Union Maj. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren advanced his V Corps up Laurel Hill, where they were surprised to find fresh infantry reinforcements. Warren’s attacks to drive off the Confederates were rebuffed with heavy losses, and the two sides began to entrenched.

Grant tried to break the deadlock at Spotsylvania over the next two days. After an initial Federal breakthrough, Lee shifted reinforcements into the salient but was countered by Grant hurling more troops at the Confederate works. Fighting devolved into a point-blank slaughter — amid a torrential downpour — that lasted for 22 hours and claimed roughly 7,200 lives.

The stubborn stand by Confederate troops at the Bloody Angle gave Lee the time he needed to construct a new line of earthworks across the base of the Mule Shoe Salient. The Army of the Potomac, exhausted from its attack on the angle, did not immediately test the new line. Instead, Grant slid his army to the left. When Union troops finally moved forward toward this position early on May 12, they were met by massed artillery fire and easily repelled. Stemmed but undaunted, Grant called off the attack and resumed shifting his troops to the left. The campaign of maneuver would continue.
“QUICK as LIGHTNING, a sheet of flame burst from the REBEL LINE, and the leaden hail swept the ground over which the column was advancing, while the CANISTER from the artillery came crashing through our ranks at every step.”

“We are lying low, and not a word is spoken above a whisper in our ranks,” recalled a member of the 49th Pennsylvania Infantry. “We see the duty we are expected to perform, and orders are quietly passed along the line in a whisper.” Moments later, nearly 4,500 Union infantrymen sprang to their feet and sprinted across some 200 yards of no-man’s-land toward the fortified Confederate position near Spotsylvania Court House.

The Bloody Horror of Upton’s Charge written by Kristopher D. White
the Federal tide swept over and into the Confederate works. It was a resounding success; the type of success that the Federal high command had been seeking since it initiated the 1864 spring offensive one week earlier. The Federal assault column gained a foothold inside of the Confederate fortifications, prompting overall Union commander Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant to growl, "Pile in the men and hold it!"

But within an hour, fierce Confederate counterattacks forced the Yankees back from whence they came. Although the Union assault at Leit’s Salient, a smaller portion of the famed Confederate Mule Shoe Salient, ultimately failed, it bolstered the spirits of Grant. He commented that they had tried with “a brigade today — well we’ll try a corps tomorrow.”

The 1865 Federal offensive had been marred by miscommunication and missed opportunities. In less than one year, President Abraham Lincoln’s principle army, the Army of the Potomac, had entered the Wilderness of Orange and Spotsylvania Counties of Virginia. For the third time, Gen. Robert E. Lee and his vaunted Army of Northern Virginia had battled their perennial foe, stalling the Yankee advance at the Battle of the Wilderness (May 5–6, 1864) and frustrating the enemy’s attempts to bring overwhelming numbers down upon the rebel forces. One thing had changed in the last year. Grant was unwilling to give up the fight. Whereas, Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker and George G. Meade had taken the Army of the Potomac into the Wilderness and given up the initiative to Lee at Chancellorsville and Mine Run, respectively, Grant informed his superiors I propose to fight it out on this line, if it takes all summer.

The choking Wilderness hampered the maneuverability of the enormous Army of the Potomac; thus, Grant set his sights on the hamlet of Spotsylvania Court House. The sleepy village that served as the county seat of Spotsylvania County sat at the crossroads of the Brandy Station Road and roughly north to south, and the Fredericksburg Road, which led to the city for which the road was named. By capturing the town, Grant would hold the inside track to Richmond, the Confederate capital, while also shortening his supply line by shifting it from the overtaxed Orange and Alexandria Railroad to the Steady Station to the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad depot at the much closer city of Fredericksburg. Grant further hoped to interpose himself between Lee and Richmond, forcing the old gray fox to attack Grant’s army on terrain that benefited the Federals. His ultimate goal was not the capitulation of Richmond, but rather, the destruction of Lee’s army.

By the evening of May 7, Grant’s men were trekking the 12 miles to Spotsylvania, Confederate cavalry, lacking Federal leadership and luck all played against the Federals. By 8:00 a.m. the next day, Confederate forces had won the race to Spotsylvania.

The Southern Army set up a stout defensive line, with its left anchored on the steep banks of Po River and its right terminating to the northeast of the town. The roughly five-mile defensive line appeared formidable. Confederate soldiers furiously dug into the earth, creating strong fortifications. “It is a rule that, when the Rebels halt, the first day gives them a good rifle pit; the second, a regular infantry parapet with artillery in position; and the third a parapet with an abatis in front and entrenchcd batteries behind,” a Union soldier commented. “Sometimes they put this three days’ work into the first 24 hours.”

For as imposing as the Confederate line looked, however, there was a major flaw. The center put out from the left and right flanks, creating a salient point protruding outward from the main line. This flaw exposed men defending the salient to converging artillery fire, while diluting defensive fire from the salient. All the opposing guns could concentrate on one point, whereas defenders of the salient had to pick out many targets. Even an overshot could still land a killing blow on the far side of the salient. But Lee was convinced by Lt. Gen. Richard S. Ewell, his de facto second-in-command, that this point could be held with enough artillery and allowed to remain.

Meanwhile, Ulysses S. Grant was finding out just how hard it could be to control the Army of the Potomac. The army seemed to live in mortal fear of what Lee was up to. At one point in the Wilderness Lee commented to a group of officers, “Oh, I am bloody tired of hearing about what Lee is going to do. Some of you think he is suddenly going to turn a double somersault, and land in our rear and on both of our flanks at the same time.” He went on to say, “Go back to your command, and try to think of what we are going to do ourselves, instead of what Lee is going to do.”

Grant was also finding flaws in the high command. Maj. Gen. Gouvernor K. Warren, commander of the V Corps, had both a temper and an ego. His VI Corps commander, Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick, was habitually slow, as was the independent commander of the IX Corps, Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside. Confederate commanders Philip H. Sheridan and A. P. Hill couldn’t get along with army commander Maj. Gen. George G. Meade. The only bright spot in the chain of command seemed to be Maj. Gen. John Buford, Scout, commander of the II Corps, who had the uncanny ability of actually carrying out an order in a timely fashion, unlike his counterparts.

On May 9, Sedgwick was felled by a sharpshooter’s bullet, making the 50-year-old Connecticut native the highest ranking Federal officer to fall in the war. Command of the VII Corps was devolved to Maj. Gen. Henry O. Wright. Due to the death of Sedgwick and the constant campaigning since May 4, Grant did not mount a major offensive at Spotsylvania that day.

The next day, Grant tried again to dislodge Lee’s men by applying simultaneous pressure along the Confederate lines. In theory, this should have prevented the Confederates from being able to shift men along interior lines to a threatened point. With much of the Confederate line under pressure, the right hand could not assist the left. Yet this was not the case.

The Federal plan for May 10 called for a portion of the II Corps and the bulk of the V Corps to attack the Confederate left at Laurel Hill beginning at 5:00 p.m. On the Confederate right, Burnside and his IX Corps would attack down the Fredericksburg Road. The most complex and intermingling part of the May 10 attack would strike the Confederate center.

One division of the II Corps, acting as a link between the VI and IX Corps, would strike the tip of the Mule Shoe Salient. This uncoordinated division, led by Brig. Gen. Gershom Mott, was intended to support the main assault columns of the VI Corps. The VI Corps assault column was unique, as war was the unit itself. It had been formed on May 18, 1862, by Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan as a “provisional corps,” yet it remained in service for the rest of the war. Compared to the other corps in the Army of the Potomac, the VI Corps had seen limited action; primarily at South Mountain, Chancellorsville, Rappahannock Station and the Wilderness. At Chancellorsville, it sustained the highest number of casualties among the seven infantry corps in the army. On numerous occasions, the corps utilized innovative tactics to capture enemy positions. At Second Fredericksburg, soldiers formed “lances,” to take the famed Mary’s Heights. At Rappahannock Station, in November of 1863, their creativity dislodged the enemy from a fortified position. Almost by default, the VI Corps was formed into a specialized task force, and on May 10, it was again called upon for its bravery and innovation.

Union engineer Lt. Colonel S. Mackenzie scouted the Confederate lines on May 10 and found that a portion of the western face of the Mule Shoe was vulnerable to attack. Although the Confederate lines consisted of chest-high fortifications with a protecive head log and abatis, the closeness of the line to an adjacent woodlot, some 200 yards away, limited the Confederate field of fire. The woods also concealed any attack forces. Nevertheless, the Confederate line was “of a formidable character with abatis in front and surmounted by heavy logs, underneath which were loop holes for musketry.”

Mackenzie reported his findings to Brig. Gen. David Russell. After verifying the report, the VI Corps high command
devised a plan of attack. Twelve regiments of infantry were hand
selected from brigades in Russell’s division and the division of
Gen. Thomas Neill — some 20,000 men in all. Command of the
assault force was given to Col. Emory Upton, a 24-year-old
native of Batavia, N.Y. After attending Oberlin College, Upton
went on to the United States Military Academy at West Point,
where he graduated eighth in the class of May 1861.

The young colonel was described as having “a light mus-
tache, high cheek bones, thin face, and a strong square jaw.
He had a small mouth and thin, unusually closed lips, which
made his mouth look even smaller. His deep blue, deep-set eyes
seemed to be searching all the “time.” One biographer
described him as being single-minded in his pur-
pose. Upton “never drank, smoked, or cursed, and
seemed laughed. He was assiduous to the point of be-
ing acutely uncomfortable in the presence of civilians.”

Upton was every inch a soldier and unquestiona-
ibly one of the finest com-
bat leaders to come out of
the Army of the Potomac.
In late 1862, he had been
given command of the
121st New York Infantry, a unit later dubbed “Up-
ton’s Regulars,” due to the discipline he instilled in them.
Accounts vary as to who came up with the overall opera-
tional plan for the VI Corps assault on Devil’s Salad, but there
is no doubt that it was Upton who executed it. His orders were
simple: “You will assault the enemy [sic; entrencheds in four
lines].” Corps commander Horatio Wright told Upton, “Capt.
Mackenzie will show you the point of attack. Meigs’ division will
support you.”

Late on the afternoon of May 10, Upton called together
his 12 regimental commanders. The knot of officers crept
to the edge of the woods, across from Devil’s Salad. Upton
laid out his plan of attack. He would use coup de main tactics, inor-
perting speed and
shock to gain the enemy
works. He also called for
a compact column three
regiments across and
four regiments deep, a

formation reminiscent of the Greek hostpipe phalanx or that of
the Swiss pikeners.

The first line of the attack consisted of the 121st New
York, 96th Pennslyvania and 5th Maine. These regiments would
advance with muskets loaded and capped and bayonets fixed. When
the first line broke through, the New Yorkers and Pennslyvaniaans
were then to wheel to the right and dislodge the Confederates
in the western salient and silence the rebel battery, while the 5th
Maines was to wheel left and clear the eastern salient. The sec-
ond and third waves, which consisted of the 5th Wisconsin, 8th
and 43rd New York, would pile into and onto the earthworks. They
would keep the line of retreat open while also supporting the forward move-
ments of the first line. The fourth line — which consisted of the 6th,
5th and 2nd Vermont — would hold fast at the edge of the wood line as a
reserve. The second, third and fourth lines were to load their muskets and
fix bayonets, but they were not to place the percussion cap on the muzzle
of the gun. Upton wanted to thwart any intentions of his men of stopping
to shoot at the enemy, thus roving the attack force momentum.

“All of the officers were instructed to repeat the command ‘for-
ward’ constantly, from the commencement of the charge till the
works were carried. No man was to stop and succor or assu a
wounded comrade.”

A pre-assault artillery barrage utilizing three VI Corps bat-
teries — 14 guns in all — was deployed to soften the enemy posi-
tion. If all went well, Upton’s men would break through the Con-
 federate lines, creating a gap for the rest of the Union army to
exploit. Meigs’ men, in theory, would support Upton’s men and
help expand the gap. The problem was what Upton and Meigs
did not coordinate closely with one another, and Upton’s role in
the assault seemed to be a mystery.

Across the no-man’s land, the Confederates were aware
something was amiss. Their pickets had been driven in by com-
panies of the 65th New York and 49th Pennsylvania, and there
seemed to be an unusual amount of activity.

Devil’s Salad was named for George Dales, a Georgia law-
yer turned brigade commander. His three Georgia regiments
manned the works. One Georgian thought that “a death-like
stillness (kung) over the lines.” Around 3:30 p.m., the Feder-
al assault along Lee’s line started with a bang. Wilson led his
troops in at Laurel Hill and an hour or so later, Burnside’s IX
Corps launched an impetuous attack on the Confederate right
enemy was releasing or low on ammunition left, less than one percent of
pounds treated in Union hospitals for which accurate records remain
were caused by bayonet. More often, the bayonet saw use in mundane tasks,
as a readily accessible blade in camp.

Confederates threw down their rifles and sur-
rendered. Scores of them were pointed toward
the tree line and told to make their way toward the
Union lines. As they did so, a member of the 49th Pennsylvania
described how “a rebel lieutenant, after passing to the rear, orders
his men to pick up the guns that our dead and wounded have
left on the field and fire on us from the rear.” To stop this from
happening, “Sergeant Sam Steinier” put a “ball into the rebel’s
back, who threw his hands up and dropped to the ground. This
stopped the picking up of guns.” One Confederate said that “Gen.
Dahle was captured, but when the enemy was driven back he fell in . . .
assumed command.”

Upton’s coup de main tactics worked to perfection. His men
covered the 200 yards of open land within two minutes. Scores
of Confederates surrendered. Some leapt out of the front of their
works into the no-man’s land and retreated along the front of
their works, before re-crossing and joining their comrades.

One Confederate thought that “The Yankees fought with
unusual desperation, and where the artillery was, contended as

It was a scene of UTTER HORROR AND PANDEMONIUM with the
bayonet used freely: Men thrust and
threw bayonet-tipped
muskets at one another “pinning
them to the ground.”

FREDERICKSBURG & FEDERALSVILLE NATIONAL MILITARY PARK NV
HISTORY CENTER

Confederates
Ammunition was running low and, FOR WHATEVER REASON, no one in the Union chain of command had thought to have a mobile reserve of troops ready to support Upton.

"had no muskets" and were prisoners of war. The Howitzers redoubled their efforts, angered that their comrades "had surrendered without firing a shot and were going to the rear as fast as their cowardly legs would carry them." In the end, "no artillerymen could stem the torrent now nor wipe away the foul stain upon the fair banner of Confederate valor."

On the east side of the breakthrough, the famed Stonewall Brigade fought desperately to stop the Union wave; on the western side, it was Brig. Gen. James Daniel's brigade of North Carolinians. Reinforcements were needed when Lee arrived on the scene. For the second time in four days, he watched as a portion of his army fell apart around him. Richard Ewell arrived too, bellowing, "Don't run boys, I will have enough men here in five minutes to eat up every damned one of them!"

For all of the weaknesses that the salient presented, one advantage was its interior lines, which allowed faster movement inside of the position. Southern forces began arriving en masse within 30 minutes of the initial breakthrough. Federal reinforcements did not materialize.

Upton was becoming hard pressed. He looked back for his fourth wave, which should have been positioned at the edge of the tree line as reinforcements, but they weren't there. The Vermont boys, like Upton, had their fighting blood up and had charged across the field and into the fray without orders. Ammunition was running low and, for whatever reason, no one in the Union chain of command had thought to have a mobile reserve of troops ready to support Upton. Reluctantly, the New Yorker called for his men to withdraw. "We don't want to go. Send us ammunition and rations, and we can stay here for six months," decreed Upton's depleted soldiers.

Had they stayed, they would have become Confederate prisoners, as Upton and his men gave up the field. His hour or so of fighting had breached the Confederate lines and secured some 93 enlisted men and 37 Confederate officers as prisoners. Emory Upton was visibly upset after the attack that his men had been driven back. His column lost some 1,000 men in the assault, with 216 of them from the 49th Pennsylvania, an exceedingly high number given the fact that only six companies from the regiment were engaged.

THE FEDERAL HIGH COMMAND had not only failed to properly support or reinforce the assault, they had also failed to properly coordinate it — something that was now a recurring theme in the week-old campaign. Although a failure, the attack on Upton's salient showed Grant that Lee's line could be broken, and that the Confederate salient was a weakness.

Following the Union withdrawal from the salient "a Confederate band moved up to an elevated position on the line and played 'Nearer My God to Thee.' The sound of this beautiful piece of music had scarcely died away when a Yankee band over the line gave us the 'Dead March.' This was followed by the Confederate band playing the 'Bonnie Blue Flag.' As the last notes were wafted away on the crisp night air a grand old style rebel yell went up. The Yankee band then played 'The Star-Spangled Banner,' when it seemed by the response yell, that every man in the Army of the Potomac was awake and listening to the music. The Confederate band then rendered 'Home, Sweet Home,' when a united yell went up in concert from the men on both sides."

In less than 48 hours, the two sides would again fight in the Mule Shoe, but this time on a far larger and BLOODIER SCALE.

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certain Death.

Day 5

Warfare is terrible enough at a distance, when performed with artillery or musket. It takes on a new level of gruesome horror when the enemy is within arm’s reach and the blood is literally on your hands.

by Christopher Mackowski
CURRENT PHOTOGRAPHY BY Buddy Secor

intro by Timothy O’Sullivan
It was a “panoply of HORROR.”

A “PANDEMONIUM OF TERROR.” A literal saturnalia of blood.” One Federal soldier described the scene as “a Golgotha”—a place of skulls.

Union and Confederate soldiers had endured years of privations and pitched battles, yet nothing had prepared them for the fighting in the Mule Shoe Salient at Spotylvania Court House on May 12, 1864. “I have, as you know, been in a good many hard fights, but I never saw anything like the contest,” wrote one Louisiana soldier.

At 4:35 a.m., some 20,000 Federal soldiers launched a furious attack on the center of Gen. Robert E. Lee’s defenses. They shattered the Confederate line and captured more than 3,000 prisoners, along with 22 cannons, two general officers and 30 stands of colors. “Men in crowds with bleeding limbs, and pale, pain-stricken faces, were hurrying to the rear,” a Virginia artilleryman said.

On the Confederate right, the Federal IX Corps attacked in force to provide additional pressure. In the center, Federal soldiers flooded into the breach in the Confederate line.

The Army of Northern Virginia teetered on the brink of destruction, Lee rode toward his embattled center. “Not a word did he say,” noted one observer, “but simply took off his hat, and as he sat on his charger I never saw a man look so noble, or a spectacle so impressive.”

Lee watched as his army crumbled around him.

The collapse of the Mule Shoe Salient was of Lee's own making. The Confederate line at Spotylvania ran for nearly five miles, laid out as troops rushed on to the field—a moment of crisis—to resist Federal assaults. "Run for your rail piles; the Federal infantry will reach them first, if you don’t run!" implored Confederate cavalrymen as foot soldiers arrived on the scene. In response, one Southern soldier said, "Our men spring forward as if by magic," while another described them "scurrying hell-for-leather full speed around there just as the enemy came up.

Lee's army unwound along ridgesides that gave his men strong defensive positions and effective fields of fire. And as soon as they staked out a position, they began to fortify it. "The rebel works were constructed as follows," a New Yorker later explained: A layer of stout logs close together & breast high was made and banked on the front side with earth. Above this with space to fire between was laid another log larger than the others protecting the heads of the defenders. For several rods in front the trees were felled to fall outward and form by their entangled branches a dense abatis. Sometimes these branches of these trees had been sharpened so as to impale assailants. ... Behind such works Lee's veteran army lay and was virtually unavailable.

The left flank of the Confederate line was the strongest, anchored on the Po River and along the low crest at the southern edge of a field on the Spar Ridge Farm—an area also known as Laurel Hill. The right flank of the line terminated southeast of the village of Spotylvania Court House itself. While it lacked the topographical advantages of the left flank, the Confederate right was relatively secure, given that the bulk of the Federal army was massed along the Confederate left and center.

The weakest point on the rebel line was its center. In following the natural contours of the land, the chief topographical engineer of Lee's army, 44-year-old Maj. Gen. Martin Luther Smith, had laid out a giant bubble known as a salient. Such protrusions are an inherent weakness: a breakthrough at any point along the line lets the enemy suddenly command a position behind the entire salient and makes the entire position untenable. The concentrated firepower of converging artillery and small arms also make a salient vulnerable, which Confederate infantrymen noted in the tip of the salient recognized almost immediately. "After throwing up breastworks, we found that the Yanks had a cross fire on our regiment," one of them wrote in a letter published in the Richmond Times-Dispatch. "We then went to work and built pens, each holding eight to ten men." Also called traverses, these pens were breastworks built inside the line, perpendicular to the main works, that offered soldiers a degree of additional cover.

Hancock—worrying about the desperate fight he knew lay ahead—lamented, "I know they will not come back! THEY WILL NOT COME BACK!"

The protrusion, a mile across at its base, curved in a large arc that conferred a name on the position through untenable resemblance: the Mule Shoe Salient.

Lee, a former engineer himself, became aware of the salient during an inspection of the line on May 9. However, rather than correct the flaw by repositioning his line, he deferred to the judgment of his de facto second-in-command, Lt. Gen. Richard S. Dowell, who oversaw the center of the overall Confederate position. The 47-year-old Second Corps commander was convinced he could hold the salient if supported by strong artillery. Smith was convinced, too. Even the artillerymen themselves were impressed. "The breastworks were built, we were in place and, supported by infantry, absolutely impregnable against successful assault," one of them said.

Even after the disaster along the line on May 10, when Col. Emory Upton attacked protruding spot known as Doak’s Salient, Lee let the Mule Shoe position stand.

Rain fell in torrents as the men marched, turning roads into quagmires and streams into raging rivers. Guido became lost at the Federals slugged into position. "The wind sobbed drearily over the meadows and through the trees, rain fell steadily, and the night was so dark men had to almost feel their way," wrote one Mainer.

The movement was necessarily slow with frequent halts; another soldier recalled, "at which time the men wore out by loss of sleep and the terrible nervous and physical strain they endured during the past eight days, would drop down for a moment's rest, and be asleep almost as soon as they touched the ground."

Lee was acutely aware of the Federal movement, but he failed to understand its intent. He believed that, after a few days of stalemate, Grant had decided to give up the offensive and shift from his axis of advance — the Brock Road — over to the Fredericks-
“This combined fire of infantry and artillery was more than human flesh could stand and it was impossible for them to reach our lines.”

Rising in unison, the Confederate line took aim. Maj. Gen. James Walker noted how his Steenwijk Brigade “tore into their trusty muskets deliberately...with a practiced aim which would have carried havoc into the ranks of the advancing Federals. But when the command to fire came, “pop, pop, pop” rang out along the line, not “bang, bang, bang.” Almost to a man, the guns failed to discharge because of wet powder.

The 26th Michigan and the 14th Pennsylvania came over the top, followed by scores of other Federal regiments. The attack became a free-for-all. Half-dressed Confederates tried to stand their ground as Yankees “poured in one irresistible mass upon us” and they were “unable to retrace their steps; musket and bayonet turned in the gloom.” (Wes very plainly where we were and we needed no orders, for the longer we were getting to them, the

materialize to exploit the gap. The same weakness that had under cut the success of the May 10 attack seemed doomed to repeat.

ROBERT E. LEE — the man ultimately responsible for the initial flaw in the line and the man who weakened it further by withdrawing the artillery, and also the man who was foolishly misused Federal intentions — arrived on the field with a monumental task before him. Somehow, he had to stave the flood of Federalism into his center, recite the weakness of his line and show leadership amidst chaos. He became the calm eye at the center of the hurricane. The Mule Shoe, Lee now admitted, was untenable. He ordered his engineers to real it off by laying out a new line one mile south of the tip of the salient. The survivors of Johnson’s division, already streaming to the rear, were rallied and set to work on construction.

Lee needed to buy time for the work to progress, and he began to contemplate an escape.

Near the western base of the salient, the stout North Carolina brigade of Brig. Gen. Junius Daniel stemmed the Federal tide, although Daniel himself was mortally wounded in the effort. A few pieces of artillery wheeled around to provide backup. (T) his combined fire of infantry and artillery was more than human flesh could stand and it was impossible for them to reach our lines,” said Maj. Cyrus B. Wilson of the 65th North Carolina. On the eastern side of the salient, the Federal had cleared most of the Confederate resistance, although the North Carolina brigade of James Lane still held.

Between those two extremes, Lee had a reserve command commanded by Brig. Gen. Julian B. Gordon, which was already trying to provide a rallying point for some of the retreating Confederates. (“They were very hard to rally,” admitted an artilleryman who had retreated with the Confederates. “[M]any of them were still running and heedless as if they had no idea of stopping at all.”)

Lee prepared to lead Gordon’s men in a counterattack. “The General’s countenance showed that he had despaired and was ready to die rather than see the defeat of his army,” a Confederate soldier said. Gordon and his men, however, convinced their commander to turn back. His life was far too valuable.

Rather than attack the center of the Federal mass, Lee and Gordon dispatched units to the edges of the bulge. Working their way inward, brigades of Georgians, Virginians, North Carolinians, Mississippians, Alabamians and South Carolinians traded their lives for time. Fuss by foot and yard by yard, the Confederates wrestled back their abandoned works. “The enemy came forward in immense numbers and made the most desperate attempt to recover their lost ground,” wrote Lt. Josiah Penvill, a staff officer in the II Corps. “They seemed determined to gash back at any cost what had been lost, and the most severe close fighting of the war ensued.”

UTTERNUTT SOLDIERS managed to re-capture all but 400 yards of their original line, but it came at a high cost. In addition to Daniel, brigade commanders Stephen Ramsaur, Alonzo Perrin, Samuel McGowan, Robert Johnston and Thomas Garrett all fell either killed or wounded. Thousands more Confederate infantrymen fell dead or wounded. “[T]he debris in the track of a storm.”

Along the salient’s western face, where the line turned toward the south, both sides poured men into action. Federal reinforcements finally swept into the fray, using the protracted conflict of a sullen that funneled men toward the very spot Confederate forces were also converging. “I have heard that blood-drenched battle swept away, called ‘Tallulah’s acres',” wrote Robertston Roberts added. Many called it “The Bloody Angle” — a “sweating, bubbling, roaring hell of hate and murder,” said John Halsey of the 17th Maine.

By 4 p.m., the Federals around the next bend were engaged perhaps 150 yards of the works, but those few yards witnessed some of the most barbaric hand-to-hand combat of the Ameri
can Civil War. “The fighting was horrible,” one Mississippian said. “The breastworks were slippery with blood and rain, dead bodies lying underneath half trampled out of sight.”

The 16th Mississippi’s flag bearer, Sgt. Alexander Mixon, was shot while leading his regiment into the dense heart of the fray. Only wounded, he picked up his flag, staggered forward, but was then shot through the head. The flag remained standing at the very apex of the west angle. Union soldiers charged forward to capture the colors, but Mississippi and Alabamians counterattacked with equal ferocity.

“At every assault and every pulse new bodies fell on the heaps of the slain, and over the filled ditches the living fought on the corpses of the fallen,” said a New Jersey officer. “The wounded were covered by the killed, and expired under piles of their comrades’ bodies.”

With Federals on one side of the blood- and rain-soaked trench, and Confederates on the other side, the fighting took on an intimate nature. Men reached over the works and blasted their feet at point-blank range. Bayonet-tipped muskets thrust through and over the works into soft flesh.

A Federal, after seeing one of his officers gunned down from the top of the works, heard his musket like a gong at the Confederate who had fired the shot. “The force with which he threw it,” a witness later said, “drove the bayonet entirely through his chest, burying, at least four inches of the muzzle of the gun in the breast of the Confederate, who uttered the most unearthly yell I ever heard from human lips, as he fell over backward with the gun sticking in him.”

Wounded men fell into trenches that were filled with at least a foot of bloody, muddy water. Some, unable to lift themselves back up, drowned as other wounded and dead men fell upon them. Corpses were stacked like cordwood and used as makeshift beds. One dead Union soldier absolved an estimated “five thousand” minie balls — enough to turn his body to sponge.

As Brig. Gen. Samuel McGovney’s brigade charged toward the West Angle, bullets shattered the staff of the 1st South Carolina’s flag. As the assault began to falter, color bearer Charlie Whilden snatched up the fallen banner and wrapped himself in it, pushing forward through the knee-deep mud with his regiment and the rest of the brigade in tow. Wilden planted his Palmetto flag, and his comrades rallied around it.

“Wounded men fell into trenches that were filled with at least a foot of BLOODY, MUDY WATER.”

For every wave Grant sent in, Lee countered by shifting more men into the fight from other parts of the Confederate line. Grant’s failure to put significant pressure on the entire Confederate line gave Lee the flexibility to shift troops to his embattled center. Federals kept arriving at the front, but officers had no place to park them in. The resulting ‘beetleback’ left Federals sprawled from the outer edge of the works in a blue carpet that led all the way back across the assault field.

In an attempt to break the impasse, Union II Corps commander Hancock rolled some 30 guns into line along the Lansdown farm lane — roughly 400 yards from the Bloody Angle — and started pummeling friend and foe alike. He then ordered up other ordnance, 24-pounder Columbias, intended to lob shells into and over the works. Unfortunately, the green cannon crew was firing the guns for the first time in anger. Many of their shells fell short, hitting their own men lying in front of Hancock’s idea was a failure.

Then Lt. Richard Metcalf ran two cannon up close to the Bloody Angle and began belching canister at nearly point-blank range. Mississippians flooded out of the works in an attempt to take the guns, but loads of double canister quickly dissuaded them. Still, Metcalf’s section suffered a fearful toll in its advanced position. He lost all of his horses, and all but two of his men were ordered to slip away from the front line, their Herculean task accomplished. The new line was ready.

By the time dawn lightened the drizzling sky, Federals were mounting a cautious pursuit. They crept forward through what was left of the tree line to their front and emerged into the open fields of Neil McGovney’s and Edgar Harrison’s farms. Ahead, they saw a growing line of freshly churned dirt, about 100 yards deep, and fortified batteries. Lee had not abandoned the field. All of the fighting they had done the day before was for naught.

In all, the fight for the Mile Shoe cost some 17,000 victims, most of whom carpeted the area around and within the salient. Lee lost about 8,000 men killed, wounded or missing, including 3,000 captured from Allegheny Johnson’s division alone. Grant lost as many as 9,000. “The one exclamation of every man who looks on the spectacle,” said one soldier, “is, ‘God forbid that I should ever gaze on such a sight again.’”

And the Battle of Spothylvania Court House was yet far from over.

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In May 1864, the fledgling Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites (APCWS) issued its second-ever save when it formally took title to 1.5 acres of the Harris Farm, scene of the final action of the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House on May 19, 1864.

The Union army’s defeat near the Male Shoe Salient on May 18 convinced Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock’s corps to threaten Confederate communications with Richmond. When Lee, perfidious, evacuated his trenches, Grant would pounce.

Watching Grant withdraw troops in preparation for this movement, Lee became puzzled. Was Grant massing for another attack? Or was he planning to leave Spotsylvania altogether? Maj. Gen. Richard Ewell’s corps was sent on a reconnaissance-in-force to locate the Army of the Potomac’s northern flank. The Rebels set off near midafternoon, crossing the N. River and turning southeast toward the Harris and Alop Farms, both of which lay along the Fredericksburg Road, Grant’s supply line.

Blocking their path were five regiments of Union heavy artillery, led by Brig. Gen. Robert Tyler. Grant had recently pulled the so-called Heavies from the defenses of Washington, given them shells and used them to off-set the Army of the Potomac’s losses at the Bloody Angle. Veterans derisively referred to heavy artillerymen as “bandbox soldiers.” Although new to infantry battle, each heavy artillery regiment was the size of a Confederate brigade. They fought with fresh spirit, and, once reinforced, slugged it out with Ewell’s veterans until nightfall allowed the Confederates to fall back.

The Heavies paid for their bravery in blood. The 1st Massachusetts suffered 309 casualties on the Harris Farm; the 1st Maine, fighting at the Alop Farm, lost 481. Total Union casualties reached 1,500 men during this last major battle at Spotsylvania. The Overland Campaign next shifted to the banks of the North Anna River.

The Trust protected property (shown in blue on the map at right), which includes a prominent stone monument to the 1st Massachusetts Heavy Artillery, was donated by Agnes McGee, who had joined APCWS as a “life member” — the term then used for donors making gifts in excess of $1,000 — shortly after the organization’s founding.

McGee, who passed away in 2007, days shy of her 90th birthday, was a prominent figure in local politics for decades. A 1999 Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star editorial referred to her as a “farmer, political gadfly and community activist ... one of Spotsylvania County’s leading citizens.” A feature article chronicling her colorful life only months before her passing quoted Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park historian John Hennesey summarizing her reputation in local preservation circles succinctly: “Agnes is a Spotsylvania icon and hero.”

The McGee family came to live at the farm historically known as Bloomery — the Clement Harris family owned it at the time of the Civil War, giving the battle its name — in 1927. The Scottish immi-
forming a rescue squad. In the 1860s, she was the first woman president of the county election board. She later served on the committee that designed the official county seal. Despite her activism, McGee eschewed running for office herself. Instead, she attended nearly every Board of Supervisors meeting and was unafraid to voice her opinions on matters of all kinds. She favored one seat in the audience so strongly that it now bears a plaque in her memory.

In addition to caring for her cows, McGee also cared for the 1st Massachusetts Monument for many years. She endowed the lead of her father, who freely granted access to the site to descendants, history lovers and other curious parties. “We never told anybody they couldn’t go down there to see it,” she declared in a 1999 oral history interview with the Civil War Roundtable of Massachusetts. “We didn’t think it belonged to us. It really belongs to the public.”

Beginning in the 1970s, McGee subdivided and sold portions of the farm to developers, retaining several acres around the monument and the historic home, which dated to the late 1780s, as her residence. When the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites was founded in nearby Fredericksburg, the history-loving Agnes was an early supporter and swiftly entered discussions with the board to gift the new organization the monument site. Today, the 1.5-acre property, surrounded by six upscale subdivisions, is owned by the Central Virginia Battlefield Trust. Another three acres are protected by conservation easements.

Sadly, the historic farmhouse is no more. Although it had been placed on the National Register of Historic Places — both for its role as a battle landmark and hospital and its status as one of the oldest residences in Spotsylvania County — in 2000, the structure deteriorated after McGee’s death. In 2014, an LLC purchased the home and 2.5 surrounding acres for $125,000. One of the group’s principals had previously renovated historic properties in downtown Fredericksburg and stated he intended to rehabilitate the farmhouse. But, as he told the Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star, “The termite beach be to it about 10 years ago, and there was nothing left... We just decided it was too dangerous to bring back to life.”

Local historians and activists were outraged that the structure was demolished with little warning just one month later. An application to save the home and surrounding nonhistoric farm buildings was approved by the county because, in the absence of a historic district overlay or conservation easement, it had no recourse to protect the privately owned property. The tragic situation helped illustrate the limits of protection offered by various listings, none of which inherently confer legal protection.

THE MARKER in Spotsylvania County is not the only famous monument to remember the 1st Massachusetts Heavy Artillery. The Melvin Memorial in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Concord, Mass., is dedicated to the memory of three brothers who died fighting for the Union in Company K of that regiment. Alex Heald Melvin, killed at Petersburg, June 16, 1864; John Heald Melvin, died in a military hospital at Fort Albany, Va., October 13, 1863; and Samuel Melvin, taken prisoner at Harris Farm and died at Andersonville prison, September 1864. It was commissioned by fourth brother, James C. Melvin, who survived the war, and approached childhood friend and neighbor, the famous sculptor Daniel Chester French, to produce the piece. “Morning Victory” was dedicated on June 16, 1909, with 88 veterans of the regiment in attendance.

PROFILES in PRESERVATION
RECOGNIZING INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT

GOTTWALD AND HOWELL receive Lifetime Achievement awards

OVER 30 YEARS in office, Virginia House of Delegates Speaker William C. Howell has become the nation’s greatest legislative champion for preservation, spearheading the creation of the first state-level matching grant program for battlefield protection and advocating for the Commonwealth’s outstanding Land Preservation Tax Credit.

“How I should have been our champion in the General Assembly,” Lighthizer said. “His public advocacy and behind-the-scenes support for Virginia’s Civil War history has made our success in the Old Dominion possible. Again and again, Howell has worked quietly in new Virginia’s battlefields from ruin.”

The Virginia Battlefield Preservation Fund — which originally targeted Civil War sites but was expanded in 2015 to include the Revolutionary War and War of 1812 — was created in 2006 and, thanks to Howell’s conscientious leadership, has awarded $16 million in matching grants that have permanently protected more than 8,800 acres of hallowed ground. He has also been a chief champion of the Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credit, one of the most important open-space protection mechanisms in the country. Among the 741,000 acres that have benefited from the program is the Trust-protected Slaughter Pen Farm at Fredericksburg, which received $44 million in credits — a contribution that helped make the most ambitious private battlefield preservation project in history possible.

Howell also chaired the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission, which was the most successful such body during the 150th anniversary commemoration of the conflict. Through a comprehensive preconvention campaign led by the commission, events across Virginia drew some 3.7 million visitors, who spent $290 million and contributed $13 million to state and local tax coffers.

Howell, who has represented Stafford County and Fredericksburg in the House of Delegates since 1988 and served as Speaker since 2003, will retire from the legislature at the conclusion of his current term in January. He is a previous recipient of the Trust’s State Preservation Leadership Award.

URING a Friday evening banquet celebrating the organization’s 30th anniversary last week, the Trust recognized two stalwarts of the conservation movement — Bruce Gottwald and William Howell — with the Edwin C. Beers Lifetime Achievement Award, the highest honor in the field of battlefield preservation.

LONGTIME TRUST board member Bruce C. Gottwald has been a driving force for battlefield preservation and cutting-edge museum interpretation in his native Richmond, Va. He is the former chair of NewMarket Corp., a petroleum additives company that traces its roots to a community fixture to 1877, and has been under the family’s leadership for three generations.

“Bruce Gottwald and his family members have been preservation heroes for decades,” said Trust President James Lighthizer. “They are deeply committed to Virginia history and their home in the Richmond area. Bruce’s dedication can be seen in his efforts to preserve the antebellum Tredegar Iron Works on the James River, his support of the American Civil War Center and at historic land bordering Richmond National Battlefield Park.”

The 83-year-old Gottwald, who recently stepped down after a six-year term on the Civil War Trust’s board of trustees, can recall when the Tredegar Iron Works actively produced munitions; today, his family owns the site. Gottwald was instrumental in both the creation of the American Civil War Museum complex and that entity’s merger with the Museum of the Confederacy to create the American Civil War Museum.

Understanding the contributions that heritage tourism makes to the economy, Gottwald provided a leadership gift of $1 million toward the acquisition of a major portion of the 1862 Gaines’ Mill Battlefield, which set him on the path to becoming one of the nation’s most generous donors in the region’s history. But Gottwald has never sought to draw attention to himself, often minimizing his involvement in projects or declining to publicize his contributions.

Photos by BRUCE GUTHRIE

32 Hallowed Ground Winter 2017
IN OCTOBER, the Trust hosted a social media photo contest, inviting our members, fans and friends to submit pictures showcasing the ways they have enjoyed battlefield landscapes. More than 450 responses later, we invited the public to vote for their top choices to demonstrate the importance of these “outdoor classrooms,” and fan favorites quickly emerged.

Longtime Trust member Richard Houston of Harwich, Mass., had travelled to Gettysburg, Pa., in July to mark the battle’s 154th anniversary — and to participate in some of the “real time” programming that the Trust and National Park Service were hosting. “A series of thunderstorms forced a cancellation of the Reynolds Woods session, so I took refuge in the newly renovated Lee’s HQ. The group of happy Union re-enactment specialists were glad to accommodate my request for a photo when I joined them on the porch,” he recalled. “Since I often wear my ‘I helped save Lee’s HQ’ t-shirt when I’m running around my town, I took particular pride in hanging out there during the battle.”

Alan Wells shared a picture of his son Keith, a proud Trust member, snapped during a family road trip across Virginia, stopping at battlefields where their ancestors had fought. The pair had been particularly moved to stand at the intersection of the Brock and Orange Plank Roads in Spotsylvania County, where Wells captured his winning image. Keith is pictured gazing over the land on which his great-great-great-grandfather fought with the 141st Pennsylvania. In intense fighting, the unit captured the colors of the 13th North Carolina, the first Confederate flag captured during the bloody Overland Campaign. The 141st also fought with distinction at Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Spotsylvania, suffering heavy casualties in excess of 61 percent during its service.

Trust staff picked several additional winners showcasing beautiful landscapes and the “next generation” enjoying their time on the battlefield. Those honorees include: Charlie Bury, Jr., of Gettysburg, Pa., Paul Mitros of Haddon Township, N.J., and Danielle Eason of Preston, Md.

CALL FOR ENTRIES

Entries are now being accepted for our annual Student Postcard Contest! Submissions are due by April 1, 2018. Visit www.civilwar.org/contests for complete rules and guidelines.
LEADING the CHARGE
SALUTING OUR MEMBERS

SUPPORT THE TRUST’S MISSION
and discover new ways to give

T THE CIVIL WAR TRUST, we work hard to be a responsible steward of your donation dollars, earning coveted four-star ratings from the nonprofit watchdog group Charity Navigator in each of the last seven years for our efforts.

As 2017 draws to a close and you contemplate year-end giving, remember that there are many ways you can contribute to the Civil War Trust and meet your personal philanthropic goals. A tax-deductible gift of cash by check or credit card — whether to a particular acquisition effort or education programs — is just the beginning! Learn more at www.civilwar.org/give.

Gift Memberships

A GIFT MEMBERSHIP in the Civil War Trust can be a great way to introduce a budding historian to the importance of preservation or to empower an individual to take action on behalf of places where the American experience unfolded, all starting at less than 10 cents a day! Your recipient will receive all standard membership benefits, including a subscription to Hallowed Ground, communications with the donation level you select, including Color Bear status. Visit www.civilwar.org/giftmembership to give the gift of history with a one-year Civil War Trust membership or membership extension.

DID YOU KNOW?
If you are a federal employee, you can donate to the Trust directly from your paycheck through the Combined Federal Campaign. Many individual states have similar programs. www.civilwar.org/cfc

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RATHER THAN making a single large membership donation each year, many Trust supporters have chosen to make smaller, recurring credit card charges. This option can make even modest gifts have a larger impact by giving the Trust a steady availability of cash to make important purchases. Choose the level of giving you are comfortable with, starting at $10 per month. Visit www.civilwar.org/givemonthly to learn more.

DID YOU KNOW?
Your extra car, truck or RV can benefit battlefield preservation. www.civilwar.org/vehicleonation

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IF YOU ARE OVER 70 1/2, you can donate directly to the Trust through the IRA Charitable Rollover without paying taxes on your distribution. And, your gift goes toward all or part of your minimum distribution requirement. You benefit even if you do not itemize your tax deductions. This program has been permanently extended and allows for distributions of up to $100,000 total per year. Gifts may be made from both traditional IRAs. www.civilwar.org/irarollover

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LOOKING FOR A GIFT that will outlast even the firmest New Year’s resolution? Helping protect battlefield land in the name of someone on your list is a creative way of giving loved ones a meaningful gift that is uniquely tangible and symbolic of their interests. Customize the amount of your gift and send a personalized eCard to the recipient. Plus, as the giver, you will be eligible for tax deductions on your contribution to the Trust. Full details are available at www.civilwar.org/gifts.

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Top center photo by BRUCE GUTHRE; Top right: CSA Brady at the South Carolina Monument near Spotsylvania’s Bloody Angle, which marks the area where his arm was captured. Bottom by BRUCE GUTHRE.

THE CIVIL WAR TRUST’S exceptional commitment to fiscal responsibility means you can give with confidence and peace.

In saving history, we made some history of our own.

To mark our 50th anniversary, the Trust has worked with historian Bob Zeller to publish a comprehensive study of modern efforts to set aside the battlefield. Fighting the Second Civil War: A History of Battlefield Preservation and the Emergence of the Civil War Trust, published by Knox Press www.knixpress.com, is available online and wherever books are sold.

Get your copy today! SALES BENEFIT BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION!
2018 CONFERENCE REGISTRATION OPENS!

Marching Toward Freedom: The Wars of America’s First Century in Virginia’s Historic Triangle

JOIN Civil War Trust members, staff and friends for four days of camaraderie, as we explore one of the most historic regions of the country, an area deeply embossed in the conflicts that established and confirmed America’s independence. From the “World Turned Upside Down” for a British army at Yorktown, to an American army pushing up the Virginia Peninsula “To the Gates of Richmond,” this is where the story of America unfolded.

The 2018 Civil War Trust Annual Conference, Marching Toward Freedom: The War’s of America’s First Century in Virginia’s Historic Triangle, will run from May 30 to June 3. Tours will cover more than 100 years of history across the region, and range from lengthy hikes to vehicle-based excursions.

Invited speakers include A.Wilson Greene, Drew Gruber, Katherine Egner Gruber and Christopher Kolakowski. The event will be based out of the Newport News Marriott hotel, where a group rate is available. Guests must make their own hotel reservations, either there or at another venue of their choice; lodging is not included in the conference registration fee. Special Early Bird pricing is available through February 15, 2018, to 2017 conference attendees. Full details on the conference and registration procedures are available at www.civilwar.org/annualconference.
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See page 36 to find what’s right for you!