



## Gaines' Mill Battlefield Transformed

### TEN YEAR PRESERVATION ANNIVERSARY

We often reflect on significant battle anniversaries but it is also important to note our organizations' milestones. RBA purchased the Boyette Tract on the Gaines' Mill Battlefield in early 2011 and sponsored our first tour later that spring. It has been ten years since the placement of the Texas Monument on the battlefield. It is worth noting that the acquisition of this critical 3-acre site, though small, is one of the more important tracts preserved by the RBA. The land lies at the heart of one of the key areas of a major battlefield, and it helped kick-start several impressive follow-up victories at Gaines' Mill. The progress has been truly remarkable!

Since the acquisition of the tract by RBA and its transfer to Richmond National Battlefield Park in 2016, an additional 285 adjacent acres have been preserved by the American Battlefield Trust. Together, these lands provided for the very first time, access to the Confederate side of Boatswain's Creek, and visitors can now walk the land where the Confederate attacks were made and heavy casualties incurred. Ever since the 1920s, when the initial tract of land at Gaines' Mill battlefield was preserved by the Richmond Battlefield Parks Corporation, only a fragment of the battlefield was accessible and able to be studied. To compare the importance of this achievement, it would be like having the stone wall at Gettysburg but not the field of Pickett's Charge, or the Sunken Road at Antietam but not the field of attack in front of it.

Confederate attacks against the Union position above Boatswain's Creek had been repulsed since early afternoon on June 27, 1862. Newly arrived units were brought up with the hopes of breaking through before sunset. Among those going forward at around 7 pm was General John B. Hood's brigade of Georgia, South Carolina, and Texas regiments. Hood's men were ordered to charge without firing (their weapons were loaded but not capped) and overwhelmed the New York, Pennsylvania and Michigan defenders in front of them. Breaks occurred at the same time at other spots along the Union line. Here the Texas Brigade earned its reputation for hard fighting.

In recent years, the park has added miles of trails and interpretive markers. A bridge across Boatswain's

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Creek now connects the original Watt House site to the new **Gaines' Mill Confederate Attack Trail**. The NPS has produced a brochure to accompany these recent additions to the Park:

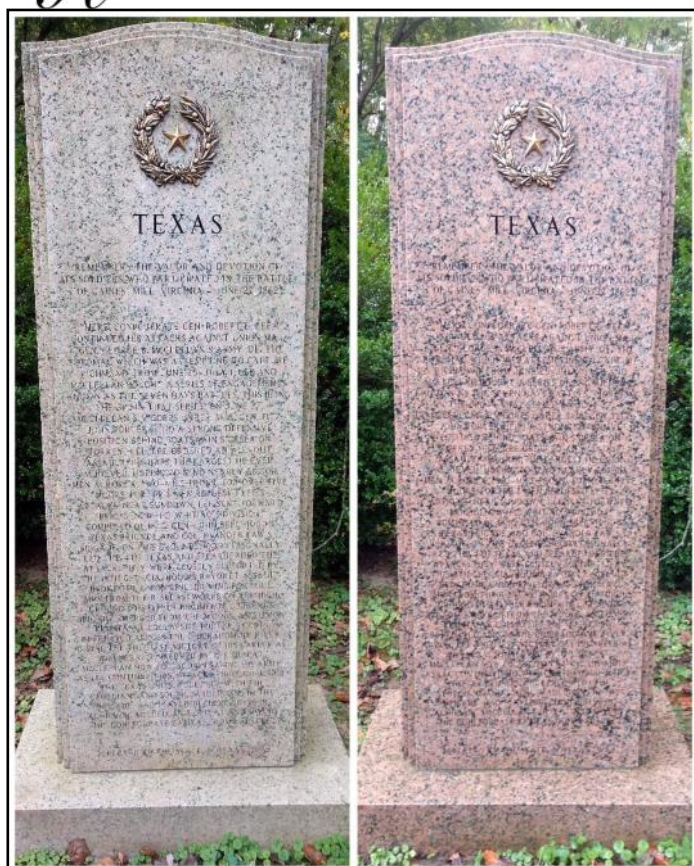
(<https://www.nps.gov/rich/planyourvisit/upload/RICH-Gaines-Mill-2-21-2020finalpress-quality.pdf>).

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*Board member Mike Andrus cleaning the Texas Monument.*





**Texas Monument.** (left) note discoloration from moss & dirt. (right) after cleaning the “pink” granite was restored.

To the east of this area, four additional tracts of land on the Confederate side of the creek have been preserved by the American Battlefield Trust and acquired by the park, again allowing for more access to and interpretation of the Confederate assaults that day. The initial preservation of the site of the Texan’s charge is an accomplishment for which RBA’s members should be rightly proud. In the decade since, there has been tremendous progress, but the opportunity for further battlefield preservation at Gaines’ Mill and nearby Cold Harbor still remains. ❖

## ADOPT-A-MONUMENT PROGRAM

In 2018 Richmond National Battlefield Park established an Adopt-A-Monument program. Similar to those at other battlefield parks like Antietam and Gettysburg, the program allows volunteers to look after and care for monuments. Park staff are often not able to frequently check on monuments, and this allows volunteers to assist with light maintenance and reporting any issues.

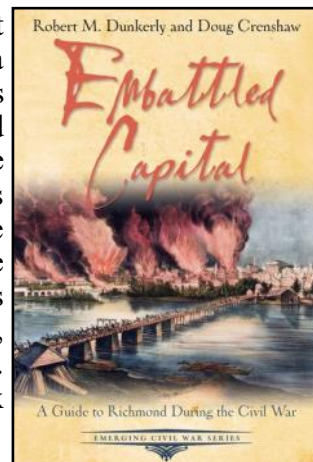
Mike Andrus of the RBA has been checking on the Texas Monument every few months. His duties include picking up litter, checking on the monument’s condition, and reporting anything in need of attention to park staff. Recently Mike and Ranger Bert Dunkerly met at the site to clean the monument.

Over the years moss and dirt have accumulated on the granite, and the park has developed a cleaning procedure for its monuments using a gentle soap and water. Mike and Bert rinsed the monument with water, used soap and brushes to gently clean off the moss and dirt, then rinsed it off with water. See the before and after photo above to see the difference. Depending on how the monument looks going forward, a yearly cleaning like this may be required in the future.

If others are interested in participating, they can contact Bert (bert\_dunkerly@nps.gov). He is also willing to give RBA volunteers a tour of new lands on a future workday. ❖

## NEW SUPPORT FOR RBA!

Doug Crenshaw and Bert Dunkerly have produced a guidebook to Richmond’s Civil War sites, titled *Embattled Capital*. While there are many guidebooks available, the authors include the most up to date information on battlefields and preserved land, exhibits, historic sites, and museums. In addition, the appendix includes a history of RBA.



Copies are available on the Savas Beatie website:  
(<https://www.savasbeatie.com/embattled-capital-a-guide-to-richmond-during-the-civil-war/>)

All profits from the sale of the book go to RBA for battlefield preservation!

- Bert Dunkerly is a park ranger at Richmond National Battlefield Park, and author of several other books in the *Emerging Civil War* series. He has been a member of RBA since moving to Richmond in 2011 and is our liaison with the Park.
- As a longtime volunteer with the Park, Doug Crenshaw routinely leads battlefield tours. He is a member of the RBA board and has written several books on Civil War Richmond, including Glendale, Fort Harrison, and the Seven Days’ Battles. ❖

Published for the RBA membership  
Richmond Battlefields Association  
P.O. Box 13945  
Richmond, VA 23225  
Phone: (804) 496-1862  
Email: 1862rba@gmail.com  
[www.saverichmondbattlefields.org](http://www.saverichmondbattlefields.org)

The RBA is chartered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All contributions are tax deductible. A financial statement is available, upon request, from the Virginia Office of Consumer Affairs.

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## MY FAVORITE CIVIL WAR BOOKS

RBA board member, **Marc Ramsey** is a proprietor of **Owens & Ramsey Historical Booksellers** specializing in Civil War books, as well as other periods of military history (<https://owensandramsey.com>). As such, Marc has attended innumerable Civil War conferences, fairs, and reenactments. We asked Marc to share a list of his ten favorite Civil War reads.

Marc responded, "I have been reading books on the American Civil War since I was 10 years old, when my Aunt Connie gave me my first one for Christmas, **Robert E. Lee and the Road of Honor**, by Hodding Carter, in the Landmark series for young readers. I was immediately hooked, and over the years since then, while taking a break from time to time to read about another era, usually military history or the odd work of historical fiction, it is still Civil War history that I turn to for my study and my recreational reading. The challenge was to keep the list down to ten, which I couldn't do, for there are so many that I have loved over the years. At any rate, here goes, a succinct list of my eleven favorite Civil War Books."

1) **Lee's Lieutenants, a Study in Command.** Douglas Southall Freeman. Charles Scribners Sons, 1942-1945. An unforgettable read, and still the best source for Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia. When you sit down in your favorite chair with these books, you forget you're reading; you are literally transported back in time, thanks to the writing skills of its great author.

2) **Fighting For the Confederacy , The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander.** Gary Gallagher, Editor. University of North Carolina Press, 1989. I love this well-crafted volume for its objective look at each of the battles and campaigns of the Army of Northern Virginia. Over the years I have advised many times that it is required reading for anyone wanting to learn more about Lee's army and his men.

3) **Lone Star Preacher.** John W. Thomason. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941. In spite of the fact that this is historical fiction, it is still true to the history, while adding some unforgettable characters to the story, especially Praxiteles Swan. The author was a noted

Marine Corps officer and talented illustrator, and the author of Ed Bearss' favorite book on JEB Stuart.

4) **One of Jackson's Foot Cavalry, His Experiences and What He Saw During the War 1861-1865.** John Worsham. The Neale Publishing Co. 1912. One of the best written of all personal narratives, and a great source for details and anecdotes of army life and equipment. We actually built F Company, our reenacting unit, around this book.

5) **Berry Benson's Civil War Book, Memoirs of a Confederate Scout and Sharpshooter.** Berry Benson. University of Georgia Press, 1962. An incredible memoir, but true. Benson really was at all of the places and did all of the things that he describes. His saddest moment in the war was when he took his last shot at a Yankee and missed, just before Appomattox.

6) **Running the Blockade.** Tom Taylor. J. Murray. 1897. These are the exciting reminiscences of a bright, young Englishman and his partners, as they risk all to make a profit running cargoes through the Yankee blockade and into Southern ports.

7) **Rags and Hope, The Recollections of Val C. Giles, Four Years With Hood's Brigade, Fourth Texas Infantry, 1861-1865.** Val Giles. Coward-McCann. 1961. Another superbly written account, being about one of the most captivating subjects of the war, the exploits and experiences of Hood's Texas Brigade in the Army of Northern Virginia.

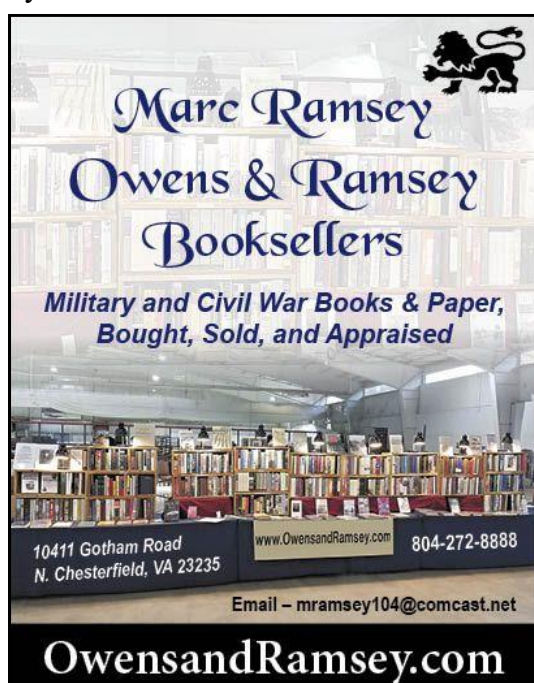
8) **"Company AYTCH," Maury Grays, First Tennessee Regiment: or, A Side Show of the Big Show.** Sam Watkins. Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House, 1882. You don't read this book, you listen to it. You listen to an old Southern veteran as he shares with you his stories and memories, most of which are probably mostly true. It's a delight!

9) **Ghost Ship of the Confederacy.** Edward Boykin. Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1957. There are few sea stories as compelling as the adventures of the CSS Alabama, and of all the books written on this subject, this is by far and away my favorite.

10) **Recollections Grave and Gay.** Mrs. Burton Harrison, (Constance Cary). Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911. The author, a novelist, and one of the "Cary Invincibles," tells the story of life in the Confederate Capital during the war, and life afterwards as she becomes the wife of Jefferson Davis' chief aid, Burton Harrison.

11) **To the Gates of Richmond, The Peninsula Campaign.** Stephen Sears. Ticknor & Fields, 1992. My favorite campaign of the war is the 7 Days around Richmond, and this is the best book on that series of battles, by one of the best military historians I have ever encountered.

Marc concluded, "These books all have personality, and are captivating reads. They are filled with personal experiences, anecdotes, irony and even at times, humor. On a final note – as I get older, I have found great pleasure in occasionally picking up one of these, my old friends, from my library, and reading it again. I will find myself transported back in time, to a familiar place, where all cares for the present are, for a little while, suspended. Enjoy!" ❖



**RICHMOND DISPATCHES**

In recent years, the Covid-19 pandemic has severely limited public events and social gatherings. During this time RBA had to curtail our annual public events. Hopefully, the pandemic is behind us now and we can resume our sponsored activities once again in 2023.

These photos are from RBA-sponsored events that took place prior to the pandemic. Scott Williams and George Fickett led our tour of the historic Point of Rocks Civil War site in Chesterfield County. Ben Brockenbrough, Marc Ramsey and Mike Andrus provided expertise during our return to Second Deep Bottom. At Gaines' Mill, with the assistance of ranger Bert Dunkerly, we were able to explore Griffin's Woods, the latest addition to the Richmond National Battlefield Park.

I thank you for your patience during these trying times and ask for your continued support of the Richmond Battlefields Association.

— Bernie Fisher, RBA President



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