



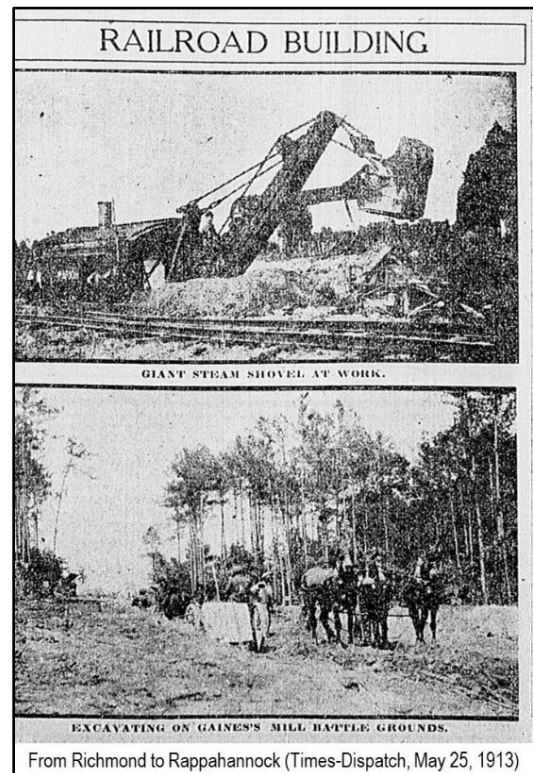
THE RICHMOND & RAPPAHANNOCK RIVER RAILWAY

“BREAKING UP GRANT’S WORKS AT COLD HARBOR” / “CUTTING THROUGH LEE’S BREASTWORKS AT COLD HARBOR”

So declared the Richmond newspapers. No, the year is not 1864, but half a century later when railroad crews laid track across the Cold Harbor and Gaines’ Mill battlefields. The Richmond & Rappahannock River Railway (R&RRR or 4R Line) was intended to run 75-miles from Richmond to Urbanna, across the Rappahannock River via ferry-boat service, to the Northern Neck. The project was met with great enthusiasm, as it promised to open new markets for Richmond businesses and provide convenient access to the Civil War battlefields. However, the R&RRR was plagued by financial and logistical challenges from the start. The railroad never made it beyond the Pamunkey River, 16.9 miles out of Richmond, and was eventually abandoned in 1917.

Baltimore’s Advantage

The rivers flowing into the Chesapeake Bay were the main routes of commerce, especially the Rappahannock River. The market for Virginia’s Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula was not Richmond, but Baltimore. Despite Urbanna being much closer to Richmond than Baltimore, the city of Baltimore was better positioned to take advantage of the region’s resources.



Baltimore gets it all. The lack of a railroad from Richmond to Urbanna means a loss to Richmond and a gain to Baltimore. —Times Dispatch (5/20/1914)

It would help Richmond considerably to get a nibble on that \$8,000,000 worth of freight that is handled annually along the Rappahannock Valley... Richmond should be waking up. —Tidewater Democrat (10/12/1913)

Richmond Reacts

In 1912 a group of Richmond businessmen, led by Joseph E. Willard, obtained charters for the *Richmond & Rappahannock River Railway* and the *Rappahannock Land & Development Corporation*, hoping to develop property along the new rail line.

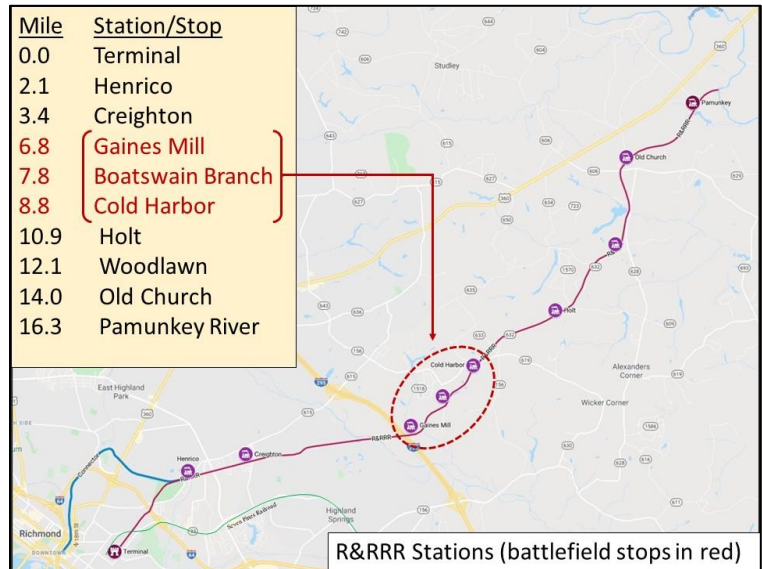
The organization is financed by Richmond men who were quick to see the possibilities offered by the opening up the new territory, and who have invested in lands and that section. —Times-Dispatch (5/4/1912)

The Richmond and Rappahannock River Railway, built solely by Richmond men and Richmond capital, has progressed most rapidly, touching a country that needs only transportation facilities for development, and the trade and people it will bring to our city will be most important. —Times-Dispatch (1/29/1913)

R&RRR Route thru the Battlefields

Richmonder Frank Woodson took a buggy ride along the line and reported, “over 100 men and as many mules are being kept busy, and I saw them making the first breaks that have ever been made through some of the old breastworks that protected General Lee’s men... at Gaines’s Mill and pulling down for the first time the earthworks thrown up at Cold Harbor by General Grant’s engineers...” (Times-Dispatch 5/25/1913).

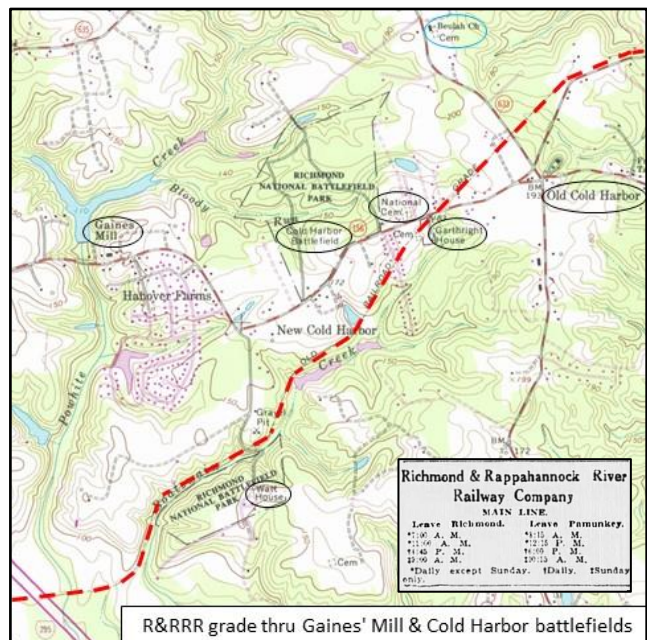
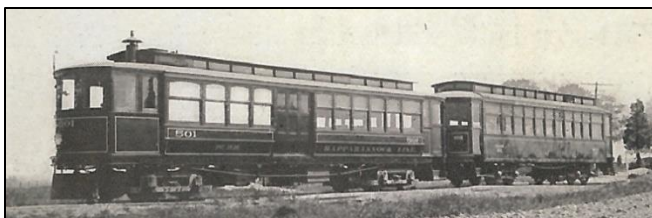
The 4R Line left the brick terminal station in Church Hill and crossed the Chickahominy River. It followed Boatswain Creek through the Gaines’ Mill Battlefield and continued across the Cold Harbor Battlefield between the Garthright House and the National Cemetery. From there, it ran east through Old Church to the Pamunkey River.



Truly this new road... penetrates historic regions and is tearing up ground that has actually been saturated with the blood of heroes. ...It looks like a pity to tear down those famous breastworks in the woods about Cold Harbor, but twentieth century progress knows and feels no sentiment... —Times-Dispatch (1/25/1913)

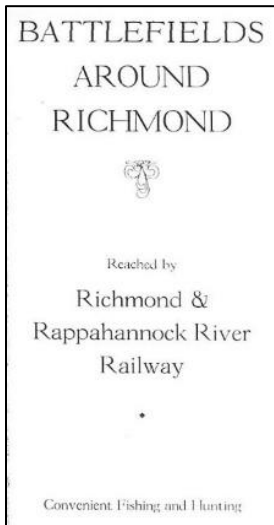
Passenger Service

Passenger service on the R&RRR started in August 1914 and consisted of two round trips a day, 60 minutes each way. Unlike the 4R Line’s freight operations powered by traditional steam locomotives, passenger trains utilized innovative gasoline-electric engines. These engines boasted quieter operation and eliminated the need for overhead wires or powerhouses.

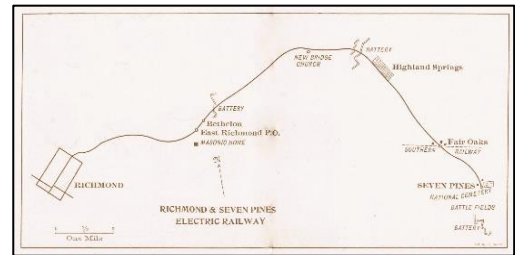


...The combination engine, express and passenger car, minus the overhead trolley, and apparently running without motive power, proved a great curiosity during its brief run over the city streets, but it was much more of an attraction as it whirred through the fields and woods... Country people along the entire line cast aside their labors and waved hats and handkerchiefs as the train sped by... at a speed in excess of thirty miles an hour. —Times-Dispatch (8/9/1914)

Civil War Tourism



Early Richmond tourists, including Civil War veterans, usually visited the Fair Oaks and Seven Pines Battlefields. It was a convenient and comfortable 35-minute trip on the Seven Pines Electric Railway running east out of Richmond. The proximity of Seven Pines to Richmond (being closer than Cold Harbor or any of the Seven Days battlefields) factored in its popularity.



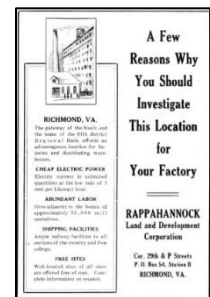
Richmond & Seven Pines Electric Railway

The 4R Line hoped to change that with the publication of *“Battlefields Around Richmond: Reached by Richmond & Rappahannock River Railway.”* The guidebook described in some detail the battles of Seven Pines/Fair Oaks, Gaines’ Mill and Cold Harbor. In addition, the railroad promoted opportunities for “Gunning and Fishing” along the route.

Until recently the battlefields, while close at hand, were difficult of access. In 1914, with the opening of the Richmond and Rappahannock River Railway, these memorable fields were brought within a few minutes ride of the city. This railway, offering clean and comfortable travel, penetrates the heart of the battlegrounds, cutting often through the ancient entrenchments themselves. —Battlefields Around Richmond (1915)

Optimism Ran High

Besides passenger service and Civil War tourism, the R&RRR offered freight service, employing standard freight cars and steam locomotives, with connections to the Chesapeake & Ohio and the Southern Railways in Richmond. To attract industrial growth along the tracks, the R&RRR offered enticing incentives including free land and sidetracks for industrial plants, cheap electric power, and an abundant labor force. By June 1915 the 4R Line had expended nearly \$1,000,000 on the enterprise. This significant financial commitment demonstrates the company's strong belief in the potential of the R&RRR to stimulate economic growth in the region.



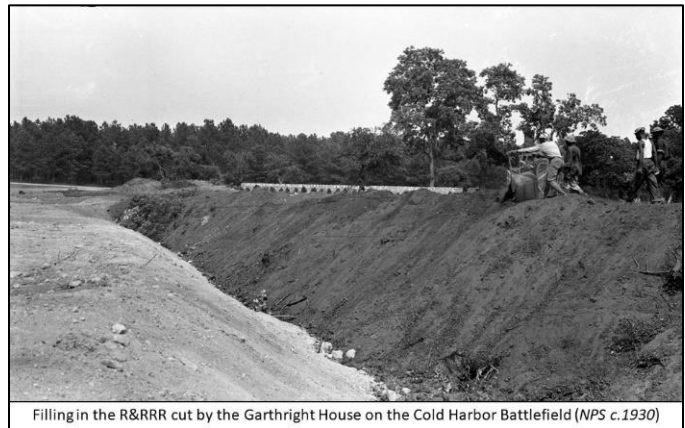
Manufacturers Record (5/6/1915)

Land values through the territory to be tapped by the new railway have jumped several notches, and sales are brisk in some quarters. ...in a few years it is expected that the new line will be dotted with homes, and schools and churches will spring up where cornfields and underbrush now reign supreme. —Times-Dispatch (8/9/1914)

What has been done, however, is but a beginning, and it is the intention to push this work steadily forward to its final completion. —Times-Dispatch (6/20/1915)

The End of the Line

Despite initial optimism and innovative technology, the R&RRR's ambitious plan to reach Urbanna by 1918 ultimately remained unrealized. Few businesses bought land along the proposed extension route, which significantly impacted the railroad's potential revenue and profitability. Acquiring right-of-way from landowners in King William County proved challenging, creating delays and hurdles in the construction process. As the project progressed, financial constraints and logistical complexities mounted, making the extension financially unsustainable. As a result, the R&RRR never extended beyond the Pamunkey River in Hanover County.



Filling in the R&RRR cut by the Garthright House on the Cold Harbor Battlefield (NPS c.1930)

Why that railroad goes no farther than the Pamunkey River... The fault lies with the people of King William County chiefly. The railroad has been denied right of way except on terms which cannot be considered. —Times Dispatch (5/20/1914)

The R&RRR's short lifespan ended with its sale at auction in December 1917. This marked the final chapter in the story of this once-ambitious railway. The railroad was eventually abandoned, its tracks removed, and adjacent land sold to nearby farmers.

Echoes of the R&RRR



Remnants of the R&RRR can still be discerned on Google Maps satellite imagery. The terminal building at 29th and P Streets remains intact, having served as a drug store, dry cleaners, and even a night club over the years. On the Gaines' Mill battlefield, keen eyes can still discern a section of the old railroad bed. The Gaines' Mill tract saved by RBA even retained a railroad easement on paper, with the rail bed lying 100 yards south of the Texas Monument. If you've participated in any of RBA's tours at Gaines' Mill, you've traversed the old R&RRR rail bed (left: RBA's Annual Tour in 2019 featuring a stop at the R&RRR rail bed in Griffin's Woods). ❖

ANNUAL MEETING & TOUR RECAP – COLD HARBOR

On a fine summer-like morning in late October, RBA hosted a walking tour of the Cold Harbor Battlefield. We were fortunate to have historian Dan Davis guide our group across ground recently saved by the American Battlefield Trust (ABT). This land offered a poignant setting for learning about the sacrifices made during two pivotal battles of the Civil War. Dan recounted tales of the



fierce fighting that occurred here during the Battle of Gaines' Mill in 1862 and again at Cold Harbor in 1864. Outgoing RBA president Bernie Fisher took the opportunity to highlight the crucial partnership between the RBA and the ABT, which has played a vital role in safeguarding these irreplaceable historical landscapes.

Over the years, RBA and ABT have partnered on preservation efforts at Ft Harrison, Glendale, Cold Harbor, North Anna, and Second Deep Bottom. The partnership between the RBA and the ABT has helped to ensure that these important battlefields will be preserved for future generations. The cooperation of our local grass-roots organization working with the premier national battlefield preservation organization will continue. There is still work to be done!

—Bernie Fisher, outgoing RBA President

Following the tour, the RBA held its annual elections, ushering in a new chapter for the organization. With renewed enthusiasm and a shared commitment to historical preservation, the RBA looks forward to continuing its impactful work for years to come. ❖

— A MESSAGE FROM RBA PRESIDENT, MARK PERREAULT —

I want to introduce myself as the new president of RBA. On October 28th at RBA's Annual Meeting at Cold Harbor, the membership elected a slate of officers to lead RBA going forward. In addition to me, Bernie Fisher was elected Vice President, Scott Williams was re-elected as Secretary and Joe Fisher as Treasurer.

First a word about Bernie. He had led us for nine years (yes, that's right, nine years!) and decided he needed to step down from those responsibilities. But graciously he agreed to serve as Vice President to assure a smooth transition. Bernie has my deep gratitude for staying on, at least for a time, to help me and RBA.

My view is RBA is a vital and indispensable force for battlefield preservation in the Richmond region. We live here, are close to the ground and can become aware of opportunities for preservation that may evade the timely attention of a large national preservation group like the American Battlefield Trust (ABT). We can also mobilize our members as a voice for history and preservation locally. But we need to grow and do more!

Henrico and Hanover Counties, in particular, are dotted with battlefield sites, many of them unpreserved and unappreciated. I call your attention to the recent preservation of 12 acres by ABT at the Seven Pines Battlefield, a site long believed to be totally lost. We need to identify other opportunities like this.

Our members are the source of RBA's strength. I invite you to get more involved and let me know what you would like us to do — and of course help us raise the funds to do those things. Right now, we are focused on completing some longstanding projects — removing non-historic structures on the Second Deep Bottom and Beaver Dam Creek properties acquired by RBA years ago, as well as fulfilling requirements for securing funds awarded for the Second Deep Bottom property. But when these are completed, my hope is RBA will be able to concentrate on raising more funds so we can do more to interpret and protect the incredible historic lands that surround us in Richmond, in conjunction with partners like ABT and local land conservation groups. And of course, with your help and guidance.

Best regards,

Mark

DEAR FRIENDS OF PRESERVATION – CALL TO ACTION!

–RENEW YOUR RBA MEMBERSHIP –



The Richmond Battlefields Association (RBA) is dedicated to safeguarding the hallowed grounds of our nation's Civil War history. The feature article in this newsletter highlighted the devastating impact of an early 20th-century railroad that ruthlessly cut through two significant battlefields near Richmond. While a local newspaper acknowledged the desecration of these sacred grounds, it lamented that **"twentieth century progress knows and feels no sentiment."**

Regrettably, the relentless pressures of economic development that prevailed then persist today, even more amplified. Progress, as perceived by some, often comes at the expense of preservation, leading to an inevitable clash between development and conservation.

Thankfully, the unwavering efforts of preservationists like you have ensured that many of Richmond's battlefields have been spared from the relentless march of progress. The RBA has proudly stood at the forefront of this endeavor, steadfastly resisting development pressures, and safeguarding hallowed ground.

We humbly implore your continued support as we strive to preserve these sacred grounds for future generations. Your contributions are invaluable in our ongoing mission. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to this noble cause. ❖

To simplify the annual dues process, we're making a change starting next year. Annual membership dues will be due on the same date as our Annual Meeting & Tour. We believe this will make it easier for everyone to stay on top of their membership.

Yes! I WANT TO HELP PRESERVE OUR NATION'S HERITAGE.
PLEASE SIGN ME UP. (Please print)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____
(for newsletter)

Type of Membership:

<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Benefactor	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Patron	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Sustaining Member	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Active Member	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Annual Member
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Please return completed form with a check payable to: *Richmond Battlefields Association*
Mail to: **Richmond Battlefields Association, P.O. Box 13945, Richmond, VA 23225**
Contributions may be deductible as provided in 26 USC Sec. 170