



Great News at Glendale/Frayser's Farm



Help Us With A Major Preservation Project At Frayser's Farm!

The Richmond Battlefields Association is thrilled to be able to announce a tremendous preservation triumph, achieved in late December in a collaborative project with the Civil War Preservation Trust. We have closed on a crucial 40-acre parcel in the heart of the Frayser's Farm Battlefield, and now must pay for it with the help of our members and anyone interested in saving Civil War sites from destruction. The tract, acquired from the Donley family, includes the ground where General George G. Meade's Pennsylvanians clashed with Alabamians under Cadmus M. Wilcox.

Protection of the key sites at Frayser's Farm has always been high on the RBA agenda. We welcome the opportunity to protect this property permanently. It is

located on the north side of the Long Bridge Road, about a mile west of the historic Glendale intersection, and is in its original historic condition, completely untouched by any significant postwar development.

The Donley acquisition marks an exciting conclusion to the RBA's long quest for the ideal project. We have looked at several properties in the interval since our purchase of the tract adjacent to Fort Harrison in 2002. One circumstance or another has thwarted those attempts. Now we can rejoice together in a truly important preservation coup.

The RBA is a full partner with the Civil War Preservation Trust in this deal. The opportunity arose unexpectedly, late in 2005, and in order to meet the seller's short deadline the two

preservation organizations quickly forged a plan to take the necessary action.

This land is not yet paid for. Several installments of the payment price are due in 2006 to conclude the deal, including the RBA's portion of the purchase, which is \$175,000. To discharge that debt, to honor our commitment to our partner, and to guarantee the permanent protection of some truly vital ground, we need each member to contribute as generously as possible—and then recruit some acquaintances as well. Please do your best to help us complete this purchase. Much remains to be done around Richmond, but this is a wonderful step in the right direction.

Julie A. Krick,
President

Historic Overview

In this newsletter we come to you with exciting news and a rare opportunity to save part of a major Richmond battlefield, a place where history truly hung in the balance, a place that against all odds has survived to this day relatively untouched.

In June of 1862 General George B. McClellan's 100,000-man Army of the Potomac could taste victory. His magnificent army had fought the Confederates and the Virginia mud all the way from Hampton up the peninsula to the limits of the Rebel capital at Richmond. There it hesitated. A new Confederate commander took the field, and the page of history was turned. The reinvigorated Confederate army attacked, and attacked, and attacked, at Beaverdam Creek, at Gaines's Mill, and at Savage's Station. The invading Union host was staggered. Within two days

McClellan's grand design, his Peninsula Campaign, was in ruins. The roads of eastern Henrico County were choked with fleeing men, horses and wagons -- all the

General Robert E. Lee, stood poised to deliver what he hoped would be the Union army's death blow, at a little crossroads called Glendale.



"Southern Cross," one of Civil War artist Don Troiani's best known prints, represents action around Randol's Battery, on the property we are preserving.

chaos of a retreating army -- rushing headlong for the protective cover of Union gunboats on the James River. On June 30th the Confederacy's new commander,

McClellan himself was not a participant in the battle. He had transmitted a telegram to Washington filled with angry incriminations, accusing President Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton of wrecking his campaign. It was a message so insubordinate that it invited his dismissal. McClellan washed his hands of the debacle and left for the comfort of a Federal gunboat to await his fate. He did not designate any of his subordinates to take responsibility for the retreat, or command of the army. At its moment of greatest peril the Army of the Potomac was without a leader.

Lee's divisions attacked the

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Where Your Money is Going

The land we are preserving includes the site of two adjacent wartime farms owned by men named Sykes (who might have been brothers). The simple farmhouses and outbuildings stood squarely in the path of the Confederate attacks north of the Long Bridge Road. The initial Union line included artillery in the middle of the clearing, between the two houses, and for much of the battle Southern formations had to sweep through the westernmost of the two Sykes houses to threaten the Union cannon. Later, as Confederate infantry sidled to the north and east in the twilight, the action swept the other Sykes farm into the chaos.

An accurate map of the battlefield as it appeared in 1862 (see page one) shows one long, nearly continuous open field running on a north-west/southeast line. The Long Bridge Road bisected that field as it ran eastward toward the Riddle's Shop intersection. A bit farther south, a stream running mostly north/south further divided the open ground. Thus one can artificially chop the Union line into thirds, with the Sykes farms north of the road, the Whitlock Farm south of the road, and the bottom third of the open field across the stream from the Whitlock Farm.

A powerful line of artillery gave unusual strength to George McCall's division of Pennsylvania Reserves, which defended the open ground. Although the majority of that division lay south of the Long Bridge Road, most of George Meade's brigade entered the battle north of the road, on the Sykes farms. Six guns of Thompson's Battery G, 2nd U.S. Artillery swept the field there, and connected on the south with another half-dozen cannon from Randol's Battery E, 1st U.S. Artillery. Randol's guns, which saw so much dramatic action, lay in the Long Bridge Road and just north of it, on the southern edge of the Sykes farms.

When the six brigades of James Longstreet's powerful division formed for a late-afternoon attack on June 30, they naturally viewed the line of Union batteries as their objective. Half of the division attacked from west to east across the

Whitlock Farm. The other half swept up the road and through the Sykes field. The resulting carnage pitted Alabama and later Virginia troops in hand-to-hand fighting, primarily with Pennsylvanians from Meade's brigade.

General Cadmus Wilcox described the view from the Confederate side of the Sykes farm-field: "In this field, about 300 yards to the front and 100 yards to the left of the road, was a house, and beyond the house about 200 yards more was a six-gun battery of the enemy. This battery had an open field of fire, the ground in front being perfectly level." One of Wilcox's regiments reached Randol's Battery and temporarily secured it, only to be driven out by a counter-attack from Meade's men. "The sword and bayonet are freely used," wrote Wilcox.

Only a few yards to the north, in the middle of the Sykes field, Thompson's guns fired as fast as possible in an effort to keep the Confederates from getting beyond their flank. Thompson reported that in his anxiety to save his guns he instructed his gunners to fire double loads of canister into the Confederate ranks without sponging out the bore between rounds—a dangerous practice employed only in moments of great crisis.

Thompson saved his guns, but Randol did not. A. P. Hill's Confederate division arrived to refresh Longstreet's effort. A final charge by two units of Charles W. Field's Virginia brigade secured Randol's six cannon. Once again brutal hand-to-hand action decided the issue. General Meade left the field seriously wounded and the Confederates retained the battery.

Meanwhile the reenforcements that the Pennsylvanians wanted and needed were used instead in the northeastern corner of the Sykes field. Confederate brigades led by Pryor, Featherston, Gregg, and J. R. Anderson filtered through the woods and the edge of the field. They attacked Kearny's Union division in the eastern portion of the Sykes field and in the woods north of it. The action there, which is little known and poorly understood, probably produced close to 1000

casualties.

Three generals received wounds on this property (Meade, Anderson, and Featherston) and Confederate infantry captured division commander George McCall here, too.

Neither of the Sykes houses stands today, although there are ruins (possibly postwar) at each site. A visitor described the post-battle appearance of the easternmost of the two Sykes homes:

"In this house and the out-houses around it were many of our wounded men, under the care of Dr. Collins. The garden was inclosed with a picket fence, nearly every strip of which bore witness to the severity of the battle. Balls of all descriptions had torn through the house. It was a point of great importance during the conflict, and therefore so perseveringly sought on the one side, and defended with such determination on the other."

On *Richmond's* FRONT LINE

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choke point of the Union retreat from three sides, but his ambitious plan called for a degree of coordination and execution that the relatively inexperienced Confederate command could not pull off. The fighting was still furious, desperate and bloody, marked by heroism and sacrifice on both sides. Somehow amidst the confusion the Union generals achieved a remarkable degree of cooperation, improvising from their jumbled commands a defense that held on long enough for their army to slip through Lee's grasp. Bloodied and exhausted, they would exact terri-

ble revenge on Lee's men the very next day at Malvern Hill.

That this important battlefield has survived neglect and development for so long -- and has survived nearly intact -- is a wonder. Much of the remaining battlefield is held by the Morrow-Donley families. That the battlefield remains undeveloped after so long is a testament to their careful stewardship. But the time has come to protect Glendale permanently. The Richmond Battlefields Association is proud to partner with the Civil War Preservation Trust in this historic effort. The property we have committed to is the western flank of the battlefield where the day's

action climaxed in a hand-to-hand fight for Randol's six-gun U.S. battery, which finally fell to the men of A.P. Hill's 47th Virginia Infantry. Here the 47th also captured Union General George McCall, who blundered into the Confederate lines after dark. Here also General George Meade suffered two gunshot wounds, one damaging his liver. The future commander of the Army of the Potomac would ultimately die from that wound ten years later.

Robert E. Lee watched in despair as victory slipped from his grasp at Glendale. We who cherish America's historic places cannot allow it to slip away again.

YES! I WANT TO HELP PRESERVE OUR NATION'S HERITAGE, PLEASE SIGN ME UP.

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