



Meeting/Tour at Cold Harbor

It is time again for our annual gathering, which traditionally mixes a local battlefield tour with a business meeting and some socializing among preservation-minded folks. Please note that this year's membership meeting is one week later than customary. On Saturday, June 19, we will gather at the Cold Harbor battlefield for an in-depth tour of the fortifications on the National Park property, as well as the first-ever tour of the 11 acres saved by the RBA in 2009.

The day will begin at 9:00 a.m. at the Cold Harbor Visitor Center, part of Richmond National Battlefield Park. The building is located on Route 156 south, about five miles southeast

of Mechanicsville and less than two miles off the Creighton Road exit of Interstate 295. There is abundant parking on a grassy field at the visitor center. Our tour will be led by one of the nation's foremost authorities on

Park Service and is based in Washington. He has mapped and studied the Cold Harbor entrenchments with great care. David's credentials include published articles in *North and South* magazine and in the *Civil War Battlefield Guide*. He also is the author of *Civil War Sites in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia*, *Bentonville Battlefield Resources*, and *Civil War in the Loudoun Valley*, all of which are National Park Service resource studies. Most recently, David has edited for publication the fabulous journals of Theodore Lyman, the observant officer on George Meade's

staff during the second half of the Civil War, under the title: *Meade's*



This piece of a Union engineering map shows both the volume and complexity of the entrenchments at the Cold Harbor battlefield.

the subject of Civil War fortifications, David Lowe. David is a military historian and geographic systems specialist for the National

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Annual Meeting & Tour

Saturday, June 19, 2010

9:00 AM

Starts at the Cold Harbor Visitor Center

Ends at the RBA Cold Harbor property

Win a Civil War Tour

See details on the back page.

Soldier Letters From Cold Harbor

A pair of soldier letters on Cold Harbor help set the mood for June's tour. Both discuss the role of entrenchments in the battle. The first missive comes from a fighting man in the 9th New York Heavy Artillery. He and thousands of other heavy artillerymen found themselves in terrible circumstances at Cold Harbor, serving as infantry. The events described in this letter occurred on June 1, 1864, on ground we will see at our tour/annual meeting on June 19. Profuse thanks to Dennis Buttacavoli for sharing this document from his collection.

In the Field near Cool Harbor
Sunday June 5th 1864

Dear parents,
This is the first opportunity I have had to write in a long while. I will give you the details as near as I can. we marched from bell plains to Fredericksburg & from there to the north ana. we have marched one night all night through mud knee deep & it was so dark that I could not tell my many on either side except by his voice & several men in the Regt lay down & died by the road side but our boys stood it well. last Wednesday morning we broke camp at 4 o'clock & marched 15 miles with out resting & then stoped about an hour. then we wer[e] drawn up in line of battle & advanced towards the enemy. the shells flew thick & fast there was two lines of battle in front of us. we lay on our faces until the order came to advance & then we up & went on double quick through a perfect shower of rebel bullets. the Rebs fled before us like a flock of sheep. We advanced about a mile & drove them out of their rifle pits. we fought them from 4 o'clock until 10, 6 hours steady fighting. our captain was struck & wounded in the start, there has been 17 wounded & two killed in our Co. Lieut. Greenwood wounded, H. Loveless was killed instantly the first night & now

comes the saddest part Billy Wooster was struck Friday while we were lying on our faces & never knew anything afterwards. he was carried to the rear where he died in a few hours the ball passed through the back part of his head...I followed our Col. over the front line of the Rebs breast works & as I & the Col mounted the breast works I saw a reb leaving & I drew up & killed him instantly, I went on a few rods with a few of our boys & captured a dozen Rebs that were in holes dug in the ground, they threw down there guns & swung there hats & wanted to shake hands with us. they were taken to the rear & we fell back a few rods into the woods, it now being dark we fought behind breast works in the dark & a great many of our boys had their clothes & accouterments riddled with bullets. I had my haversack shot of[f] I didn't like that much cutting of[f] my supplies & not knowing when it was done...Genl. Grant has fortified beyond description. there is 7 or 8 lines of rifle pits & they are all full of troops & reinforcements coming all the time....Write often for I like to get letters but cant write very often....

J. H. Thatcher

N.B. tell the Wooster folks that Billy's remains are buried near the Hospital.

The second example comes from an unnamed Confederate artilleryman serving in Manly's Battery. This North Carolinian wrote on June 6, 1864, to one of the Raleigh newspapers, giving an update on the batterymen's experiences at Cold Harbor. The guns of this company sat opposite the RBA property at Cold Harbor.

Our battery has been engaged for four days and nights without sleep or rest of any kind. The weight of the Yankees' most stupendous efforts have been directed in our immediate front. Our guns have

been firing nearly all of each day, and late in the night. As soon as the firing slackens, we have to throw dirt and replace the parts of our works knocked down during the day. We fire double charges of canister...shrapnel and shell. Our first piece, the Napoleon, the Yankees shot the wheels off as fast as we could replace them by taking those from the caissons and limbers, but late in the day they shot the trail in two and knocked a large piece of the muzzle off. We have sent to Richmond for a new gun. Our other guns are still firing, although nearly all the bolts about the guns were shot away and scarcely a spoke remains that has not two or three Minnie balls through them. The Yankee sharpshooters are within 125 yards of our guns....If Mr. Grant ever takes Richmond, he must make a decided improvement on his style of fighting. His sharpshooters do much more execution than all his 'charges.' His sharpshooters can strike any thing from the size of a quarter dollar, up to a man. Some of our boys put a tin cup on the breastworks yesterday, and in less than a minute they put three holes through it....

Suggested Tour Reading List

Given the subject of this year's tour, participants might wish to read Earl Hess's book *Trench Warfare under Grant & Lee* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2007), much of which is devoted to Cold Harbor. His book includes diagrams of some of the Cold Harbor fortifications, and he calls the earthworks on the national park "the most singular set of Civil War fieldworks we have." This is the second volume in a trilogy addressing the subject of field entrenchments in Virginia. The third volume, focusing on Petersburg, also is in print.

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Army: *The Private Notebooks of Lt. Col. Theodore Lyman.*

The tour of the National Park Service property will be on foot (a

excellent resources owned and preserved by our organization, including some unusual entrenchments. That part of the tour has no trail and will involve walking through the woods. As always, be

noon. The morning's events are free to everyone, including non-RBA members, and will take place regardless of the weather.



walk of about two miles, primarily on dirt trails). We will see examples of 146-year-old Union and Confederate field entrenchments, including some built by one side and used by the other. Afterward we will drive a short mile to the RBA acreage just to the northeast, on Beulah Church Road, Route #633. The RBA will have roadside signs pointing the way to the second part of the tour. A short walk there will show everyone the

prepared to take necessary precautions to ward off ticks, chiggers, and other nibbling creatures. Don't miss the opportunity to see what we all helped save!

The day will conclude with a short membership meeting on our property. Water and snacks will be on hand, but bring plenty of your own water, too. RBA tours in the past have been on blazing hot days. The tour and meeting are expected to conclude at about

RBA House at Cold Harbor

Over the winter an accidental fire destroyed the small house on the RBA's property at the Cold Harbor battlefield. The little house stood on the western side of Beulah Church Road, opposite the church itself, and was not in any sense an historic structure. In fact, it stood squarely in the middle of the route used by the Union assault column on June 1, 1864. Demolition crews removed the remnants of the building and today that portion of the battlefield under RBA control looks more like it did in 1864 than at any time in recent memory. A portion of the forthcoming annual meeting will be at this site, just east of the RBA-owned Union entrenchments.

On *Richmond's*
FRONT LINE

is published for the RBA membership at P.O. Box 13945, Richmond, VA 23225. The web address is: www.saverichmond-battlefields.org. The RBA is chartered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible. A financial statement is available, upon request, from the Virginia Office of Consumer Affairs.

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Win a Civil War Tour with Dr. Sommers

Thanks to the generosity and thoughtfulness of Bruce Venter, co-proprietor of Stars & Stripes Events, the RBA is offering members the opportunity to win a free seat on an unusual tour: "Richmond Redeemed: Grant's Fifth Offensive during the Siege of Petersburg," led by Dr. Richard J. Sommers.

Dr. Sommers is familiar to most as the author of the classic study of that campaign. Although he kindly led a walking tour of the Fort Harrison battlefield for the RBA a few years ago, he does not often conduct such elaborate outings. This one is based in Richmond and runs from the evening of October 7 through

October 10, 2010. Stars and Stripes has donated a seat on the tour bus to the raffle winner (a \$425 value) with lunches included; the winner must be responsible for lodging. The tour will visit all of the key sites associated with Grant's September-October 1864 operations around Richmond and Petersburg, including Fort Harrison, the Squirrel Level Road battlefield, and some of the forts southwest of Petersburg. For extensive details and a tour itinerary, see the company's website at: starsandstripesevents.com

THE RULES: The purpose of this raffle is to raise money for the RBA, of course. Use the form

printed below to enter. Please mark it as "for the raffle," and provide either a telephone number or valid e-mail address to allow us to notify you promptly if you are the winner. Raffle entries will not qualify as membership dues. Every \$10 will count as one raffle ticket. Send \$50, for example, and we will make 5 raffle tickets with your name on them. The entries will be assembled with care, fairly shuffled, and a winner's name drawn at the annual meeting on June 19. Raffle money must be received at the RBA post office box no later than June 16 in order to qualify. The winner need not be present at the annual meeting to win.

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

(Please print)

Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip
Daytime Phone	E-mail Address	
Type of Membership:		
<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Benefactor	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Patron	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Sustaining Member
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<input type="checkbox"/> Additional Contribution: \$ _____		

Please return completed membership form with a check payable to: **Richmond Battlefields Association**
Mail completed form to: **Richmond Battlefields Association P.O. Box 13945 Richmond, Virginia 23225**
Contributions may be deductible as provided in 26 USC Sec. 170.

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Richmond Battlefields Association
P.O. Box 13945
Richmond, VA 23225

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