



On

Richmond's FRONT LINE

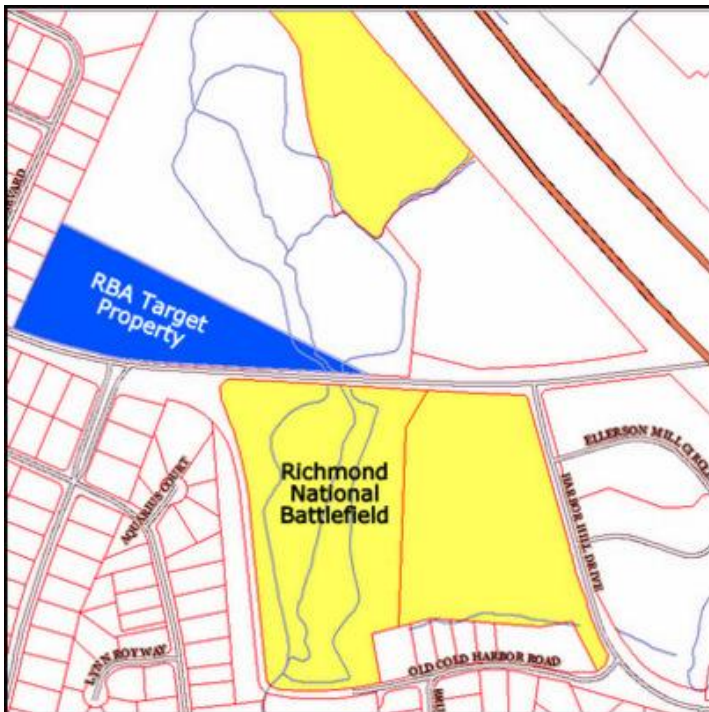
Volume 11, Number 2

Fall 2012

Victory at Beaver Dam Creek

CORE BATTLEFIELD SAVED

In November, Richmond Battlefields Association purchased one of the few remaining tracts of core battlefield land at Beaver Dam Creek, the first major engagement of the Seven Days' Battles. This newly acquired land is adjacent to the Beaver Dam Creek Unit of the Richmond National Battlefield Park. It opens an entirely new sector of the battlefield for historical interpretation.



Beaver Dam Creek Battlefield

On the morning of June 26, 1862, the Army of Northern Virginia, under its new commander, Gen. Robert E. Lee, attacked the Union right flank isolated on the north bank of the rain-swollen Chickahominy River. It was here that Confederate Maj. Gen. A. P. Hill threw his "Light Division" into a series of futile assaults against Brig. Gen. Fitz John Porter's V Corps.

As Porter later wrote, *"The position selected on Beaver Dam Creek for our line of defense was naturally very strong. The banks of the valley were steep, and forces advancing on the adjacent plains presented their flanks, as well as their front, to the fire of both infantry and artillery, safely posted behind entrenchments."*

June 26 decided the outcome of the campaign; the next six days would determine the extent of the Union defeat.

– R.E.L. Krick

On the site preserved by RBA, units from the brigades of Pender, Field, and Ripley withstood punishing artillery and musketry fire from the fortified Federal position while awaiting the arrival of Stonewall Jackson's troops from the north. The planned turning movement never materialized. Even so, learning of Jackson's presence, Union commander Maj. Gen. George McClellan directed Porter to retire to another strong defensive position behind Boatswain Creek at Gaines' Mill.

General Lee failed to deliver the intended crushing blow to the Union flank. His army suffered 1,500 casualties versus 300 for the Federals. Although a tactical Union victory, McClellan's withdrawal from Beaver Dam Creek handed the strategic initiative to Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia—the Confederate Capital was safe—the war would continue another three years. ❖

150TH ANNIVERSARY A SUCCESS

The Sesquicentennial program offered by the National Park Service this past summer attracted more than 8,500 visitors to Richmond National Battlefield Park. The Richmond Battlefields Association gladly participated in many of the activities commemorating the 1862 campaign to capture Richmond, including public events at Gaines' Mill and Glendale. Members of RBA can be particularly proud of our Gaines' Mill battlefield site. Hundreds of participants were able to follow in the footsteps of Hood's Texas Brigade on the anniversary of the battle. Despite the hot weather and sudden thunderstorms, visitation for the 150th anniversary exceeded NPS expectations. Undoubtedly, during the commemoration of the Cold Harbor campaign in 2014, visitors to Richmond's Civil War battlefields will again enjoy touring sites protected by the Richmond Battlefields Association. ❖



Historian Jay Luvaas in action at the 10th Maine Monument at Cedar Mountain with the "Army of the Cussewago" Civil War study group in 1979. – photo courtesy of Robert Freis

CIVIL WAR STUDY GROUP SUPPORTS BATTLEFIELD PRESERVATION

The Richmond Battlefields Association recently received a generous donation from the *Army of the Roanoke*, a Civil War study group that meets annually at Civil War battlefields. These longtime supporters of battlefield preservation first came together as colleagues, former students, and friends of the late Jay Luvaas, a distinguished military historian. Dr. Luvaas was well known for his detailed battlefield guides which incorporated first person accounts into the narrative. He was the first civilian instructor at West Point and co-edited the highly popular series of "U.S. Army War College Guides" to many Civil War battlefields, including Gettysburg, Antietam, Shiloh and Chancellorsville.

Groups like the AOR are indebted to the efforts of organizations like the RBA. Many of the historical sites we have visited over the years have been in part preserved by "grass-roots" organizations such as yours.

– Dr. Jim Ballou

The *Army of the Roanoke* honors Luvaas by carrying on the tradition of studying Civil War battlefields through the lens of primary source material. They have been loyal friends of RBA for many years and their continued support for battlefield preservation is greatly appreciated. ❖

RBA TOUR OF PAMUNKEY RIVER SITES

Participants in our Spring tour contributed to Richmond Battlefields Association preservation fund while enjoying many historical gems along the Pamunkey River. The tour visited several rarely seen Civil War sites in Hanover and King William counties. Among these were the antebellum homes *Marlbourne*, *Westwood*, *Summer Hill*, *Wyoming*, and *Williamsville*. All served as headquarters or hospitals, both Union and Confederate, during the war. The tour also included stops at Hanover Town, the site of Grant's 1864 river crossing, and the Haw's Shop battlefield. Thank you to all who participated in making RBA's inaugural tour a success. ❖

ONLINE DELIVERY OF RBA NEWSLETTER

Approximately 10% of our members have signed up for electronic delivery of the Richmond Battlefields Association newsletter. You too can help RBA save money by opting for electronic delivery of "*On Richmond's Front Line*". Just send your name and email address to: 1862rba@gmail.com ❖

Membership Renewal

A reminder that RBA, like many small organizations, relies on a "self service" renewal process. Please check the mailing label on the outside of this newsletter to see if your membership has expired. Your renewal date is on the label next to your name.

RBA ANNUAL MEETING & TOUR

This past June RBA held its annual meeting at our Gaines' Mill battlefield site. Attendees took advantage of a magnificent summer morning to follow Longstreet's attack across the adjacent 285-acre McDougle farm. Board members Ben Brockenbrough and Mike Andrus guided the tour through head-high corn while providing an outstanding account of the June 27, 1862 action and its aftermath.

At the business meeting that followed, Pat Walenista announced her retirement from the board after serving as RBA's first and only secretary for more than a decade. Her unwavering commitment to preserving Richmond's Civil War battlefields is to be commended. Thank you Pat! ❖



Mike Andrus leads a tour of the Gaines' Mill Battlefield at RBA's annual meeting & tour in June.

Masthead photo on page 1:

Richmond Battlefields Association 2012 Spring Tour
Marlbourne, home of Edmund Ruffin in Hanover County



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A FITTING TRIBUTE

At RBA's annual meeting in June family and friends of Edward K. "Big Ed" Wright placed a memorial bench at our Gaines' Mill site. This Pennsylvanian family has long supported battlefield preservation. Their gift serves as a fitting remembrance of a beloved father, friend and mentor. It will provide visitors a tranquil spot to sit and reflect on the fateful events of 150 years ago. ❖

Published for the RBA membership

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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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DEDICATION OF GAINES' MILL TEXAS MONUMENT

Flags were flying and bagpipes filled the air at the May dedication ceremony hosted by the Richmond Battlefields Association. Participants enjoyed the beautiful Spring afternoon as representatives from Hood's Texas Brigade Association Re-activated, the Texas Historical Commission, and RBA unveiled a new monument. In his keynote address, noted Civil War historian Gary Gallagher stressed the importance of the June 1862 battle as a true turning point in the American Civil War.

Many descendants of the 4th Texas soldiers were present as were descendants of James Longstreet, JEB Stuart, and John Bell Hood. Historian R.E.L. Krick led a tour of the battlefield immediately after the ceremony.

The 8-foot monument is carved from Texas Sunset granite and overlooks Boatswain Creek where the 4th Texas Infantry, led by Hood himself, followed by the 18th Georgia Infantry surged through three strong Federal defensive lines. The attack penetrated into the heart of the Federal position. Its line broken, the Union defense collapsed and retreated across the Chickahominy River. ❖

A FAMILY AFFAIR — STASSWENDER MEMORIALS

In 1964, as a teenage boy, Jim Stasswender made the trip from Austin to Gettysburg with his father and grandfather to install a Texas monument. Almost fifty years later Jim made a similar trip to deliver and install the Texas monument at RBA's Gaines' Mill site. Over the years, the Stasswender Memorial Company, founded by Jim's grandfather in 1915, has erected the familiar Lone Star monuments on dozens of Civil War battlefields.

The 3,600 lb. shaft & 1,200 lb. base of the Gaines' Mill monument are made of "Texas Pink" granite. This famed rock is quarried at a huge igneous batholith called Granite Mountain west of Marble Falls and was used in construction of the Texas State Capitol. ❖

PRESERVATION NEWS

Hanover County has announced plans to expand the county's North Anna Battlefield Park from 80 acres to 173 acres. Plans include extending the current two-mile walking trail and interpretive signs. The extensive field fortifications from the May 1864 battle are considered some of the best surviving examples of Civil War earthworks in the country. ❖

RICHMOND DISPATCHES – 150 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH

EXPLOSION OF A BOMBSHELL. — Yesterday, while two sons of Mr. Foster Magee, who lives in Hanover, near Cold Harbor, about 12 miles from this city, were playing with a bombshell dropped by the Abolition forces during their stay at that part of Hanover, the missile exploded, one piece passing through the side of the elder of the two boys, and another piece shattered the leg of the younger one. Neither was expected to survive.

- *The Daily Dispatch*: November 12, 1862.

The 1862 Peninsula Campaign brought the war to the very doorstep of the Confederate capital. With it the civilian population began to experience economic and personal hardship. The war would result in many tragic events, but none so cruel as the loss of a child at play.

BREAKING NEWS - ANOTHER LAND DEAL IN THE WORKS!

As this newsletter goes to print, RBA is working hard to take advantage of an exciting opportunity to save another seven acres of battlefield land. It is too early to make a public announcement, but we hope to finalize the transaction by the end of the year. Watch for an announcement from RBA in early 2013. ❖

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

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