

On

Richmond's FRONT LINE

Volume 13, Number 1

Fall 2014

Annual Meeting & Deed Transfer Ceremony

LAND SAVED BY RBA ADDED TO THE RICHMOND NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK

The Richmond Battlefields Association is pleased to announce the transfer of 18 acres of core battlefield land at **Cold Harbor** to the National Park Service. Our annual meeting will include a special *deed transfer ceremony* with the Richmond National Battlefield Park. The ceremony will take place on the newly acquired land west of Beulah Church. This area saw heavy action on June 1 & 3, 1864. The Union 18th Corps attacked across these fields, resulting in one of the costliest and most infamous repulses of the entire war. We thank the Civil War Trust for loaning us the funds to act quickly when the preservation opportunity arose. This addition to the park's holdings ensures that this hallowed ground is now preserved for all time!

An off-trail hiking tour, featuring rarely seen XVIII Corps earthworks, will follow the ceremony. Hikers should wear appropriate footwear and clothing for the season. Our annual business meeting will follow the tour. Pack a lunch & chair. Snacks and drinks will be provided. This event is free and open to the public! ❖

OVERLAND CAMPAIGN 150TH

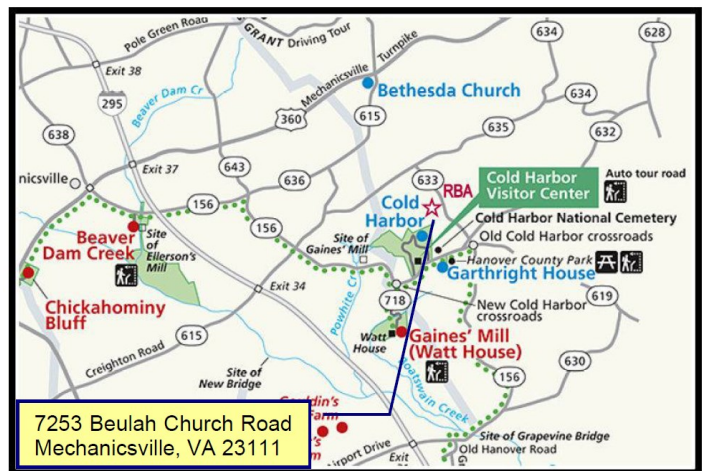
RBA's annual meeting was moved from the traditional 2nd Saturday in June in order to avoid conflicts with the Sesquicentennial activities of the NPS. RBA partnered with the Richmond National Battlefield Park in sponsoring several commemorative events throughout the summer. Historians Gordon Rhea and R.E.L. Krick led early morning tours across our Cold Harbor property on the 150th anniversary of the June 1, 1864 fighting. In addition, RBA board member Mike Andrus led nighttime torchlight tours at Cold Harbor. In July and August RBA hosted Second Deep Bottom

RBA ANNUAL MEETING & TOUR

Saturday, Nov. 1, 2014

10:00 AM

Cold Harbor Battlefield



From the Richmond National Battlefield Park tour map

tours of our Fussell's Mill site in cooperation with several National Park Service programs. ❖

NORTH ANNA PRESERVATION NEWS

Earlier this year, the Civil War Trust launched a major fundraising campaign to save 665 crucial acres on the North Anna Battlefield - the entirety of the Jericho Mill portion of the site. The Richmond Battlefields Association has contributed \$5,000 to the effort, matching a \$5,000 contribution from longtime RBA supporters, the *Grand Army of the Cussewago* (GAC). An interview with RBA president Ben Brockenbrough and GAC historian Robert Freis regarding the importance of this pristine battlefield and our preservation partnership can be found at [Partners in Preservation](#). ❖

FUNDS AWARDED FOR BEAVER DAM CREEK

Richmond Battlefields Association was one of several organizations awarded battlefield preservation grants from the Virginia Civil War Site Preservation Fund. RBA received matching funds for our recent preservation of an 8.3 acre tract on the Beaver Dam Creek Battlefield. Thirteen other state grants, totaling over \$2 million, were awarded in commemoration of the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War. These awards will provide vital assistance in protecting more than 1,265 acres of battlefield land across the Commonwealth. ❖

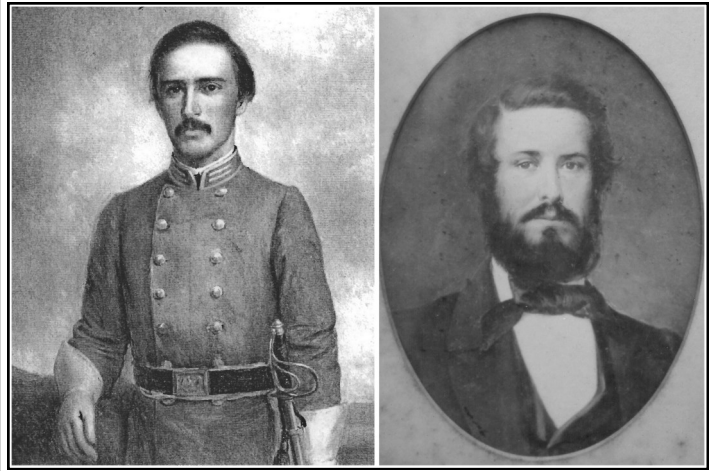
WILLIAM AND STILES HINSON AT FUSSELL'S MILL

In the spring of 1864, in the continuing effort to bolster the defenses of Richmond, five veteran companies of cavalry were brought up from South Carolina to join with the Holcombe Legion, already fighting in Virginia, and form a new cavalry regiment to be known as the 7th South Carolina Cavalry. This unit, along with the recently mounted Hampton Legion, and the new 24th Virginia Cavalry, would constitute a new cavalry brigade under Brigadier General Martin Gary of South Carolina, and would become part of the force tasked with defending Richmond. As a specific counter to Union General August Kautz's Union Cavalry Division, Army of the James, Gary's Brigade would see continuous action north of the James River, most often on the far left of the Confederate defensive positions.

Among the troops being called up from the Palmetto State were two young brothers from James Island, SC, just outside of Charleston, 2nd Lt. William G. Hinson and his younger brother Stiles Hinson, of the Rutledge Mounted Rifles and Horse Artillery. From the time that they received their marching orders, April 6, 1864, through the end at Appomattox Court House the following April, William kept an almost daily, detailed account in his diary of the activities of his new 7th SC regiment of cavalry and its men, and it is from his journal that the following account of the fighting at Fussell's Mill is drawn, as well as the story of the subsequent return home of young brother Stiles.

In August of 1864, with Grant bogged down in his siege works at Petersburg, Union forces under Major General Winfield S. Hancock were sent to make a second attempt to turn the Confederate lines north of the James, the first attempt having failed the month before. Once again crossing the river at their Deep Bottom bridgehead, and failing to make progress in direct attacks against Confederate Major General Charles W. Field's Confederate defenders, Hancock dispatched Maj. Gen. David B. Birney's X Corps to try and make an end run and turn the Confederate far left flank at Fussell's Mill. Field called for help from the south side, and quickly dispatched Gary's Brigade to block the Yankee advance and to hold the line long enough for infantry reinforcements to come up. In the intense August heat and humidity, the Union advance was slowed, and when they finally did get to the earthworks near the mill, they found Gary's dismounted cavalymen dug in and ready for them, resolutely holding on until Field could bring up infantry support. Here we join Lt. Hinson's contemporary account:

Aug. 15 - Joined the regiment in breastworks at 11 o'clock near Fussell's Mill...my poor brother had received a mortal wound about 12 o'clock the day before, was carried to the hospital in Richmond by R. Bee and died at 2:30 that night. An affectionate son and brother and a gallant soldier, may he rest in peace



Lt. William G. Hinson and his younger brother Stiles M. Hinson, 7th SC Cavalry, of James Island, SC.

and his fall inspire others to strike the harder for our country's cause. Poor Mother! It will be a sudden blow to her to bear in her old age, but his having died as a soldier would wish, doing his country's duty, I trust may be some consolation to her. Skirmishers engaged, slept in the trenches.

Aug. 16 – Advanced to meet the enemy on Charles City Road. Made a charge, dismounted, drove them back near Deep Run, White Oak Swamp. My Company (G) led the charge. Captured a number of horses. Stripling prisoner, Garrison wounded. Very Hot. Suffering for water; many men fainted. A shower of rain came up just as we halted from the charge; men dropped on their knees to get a mouthful of water, much dust on the roads. Gens. Chambliss and Girardy killed. Gen. Lee complimented the cavalry, especially mentioning Gary's Brigade. Returned to the trenches and slept in a rain. No blankets.

Aug. 17 – In trenches. A little skirmishing going on. Yanks sent in a flag of truce to bury dead who had been killed the day before in attempt to take works when we were engaged at Deep Run. They took them for a short time only and were then routed and slaughtered, principally Negroes. Capt. Jeffers was taken sick and sent to the hospital. Left me in command.

Aug. 18 – Was sent out to occupy rifle pits at 5 o'clock; was ordered to advance with whole line of skirmishers. We charged their rifle pits. My company took eight prisoners and killed two that we knew of and then laid down to await our line of battle, which did not advance after finding so heavy a body massed in our front. Robert Bee wounded in the foot. I returned and took up my position in the rifle pits. Was up all night. Men so worn out could scarcely keep them awake, although so near the enemy. I found Spann Jeffers asleep on duty standing up; he does not know I knew it.

(continued on next page)

Masthead photo on page 1:

Land saved by RBA at Beulah Church is now part of the Richmond National Battlefield Park - Cold Harbor Unit.

Aug. 25 – Visited spot where poor brother was mortally wounded.

The fighting, skirmishing and picketing would continue on an almost daily basis until the regiment was ordered into winter camp in early November. This gave time for many of the men to now tend to matters of a more personal nature. One in particular deserves recounting as a touching example of similar stories unfolding throughout the South at that time. On Nov. 17, our chronicler Lt. Hinson records in his journal:

“Had poor Stiles’ body taken up and put aboard the cars to take home.” This was no small undertaking. Hinson had first to secure sick leave from duty (he was quite ill at this time), then he had to go through Confederate bureaucratic channels for permission to re-inter his brother’s body. He then had to secure help in digging up and removing the remains from the grave at Oakwood Cemetery in Richmond, arrange for a new casket for the body, and hire a wagon in which to transport it to the Danville Railroad station. There he bought passage for himself and his precious burden on the train to Charleston, South Carolina. This was just the beginning of a journey that would not be easy.

Nov. 24 – Started at seven and went 25 miles, when we found another engine had run off ahead of us 15 miles from Greensboro. Started again at 9 o’clock. Just made connection at Greensboro at 11:30 o’clock. I could not get assistance to move the body to the other train, although hundreds of soldiers were standing around, until I met a few of the Hampton Legion and hired three Negroes just as the cars were leaving it; it only shows how hard and selfish we become when removed from softening influences and subjected to the hardships and roughness of camp life: one soon learns to think only of self. All were suffering from cold and hunger and all sensibilities appeared to be deadened; there was not a stove on the train and the wounds had not been dressed for days until they had become very offensive. Arrived at

Charlotte at seven in the morning and paid \$2 for a cup of unsweetened coffee.

Nov. 25 – Left Charlotte at 7:30 and arrived at Chester, SC at 12, where we found the good and kind ladies had prepared a lunch for all the soldiers, the first kindness we had received since we left Richmond. The difference between North Carolina and the other states is very marked. You can tell on either side as you touch either Virginia or South Carolina. It is the universal experience. Arrived at Columbia at 6:30 o’clock; stayed at the Home, having a bed but no covering.

Nov. 26 – Left Columbia 4 A.M. met Mr. Wm Lebby at Branchville. At Orangeburg the ladies had a fine spread for the soldiers, at the home of the noble Mrs. Rowe. Arrived in Charleston at dark.

The next morning Lt. Hinson went down to the Charleston waterfront and secured a boat. He also hired a wagon and several men to haul the coffin from the railway station to the docks and load it aboard the boat. He and the men then manned the oars for the long pull over to James Island, where they borrowed another wagon to convey his brothers remains to the churchyard, where they then dug the grave.

Nov. 28 – Carried the body over and landed at Godbers or Stiles Point. Got a wagon and buggy from Col. Joe Yates and buried the body at the Presbyterian Church, where God grant that it may rest in peace. Returned and spent the night at Mr. Lebby’s. Was quite sick during the night.

Nov. 29 – Started at 6 o’clock for Graham Turnout and arrived at home at midday. Alas, it was a sad meeting with my poor mother.

Lt. Hinson would slowly recover, and would return to the 7th SC Cavalry in Virginia on February 1, 1865. Wounded three times in the war, William Hinson would survive to surrender at Appomattox on April 9, 1865. He would live a long and productive life, much loved by his family and friends until 1919, when he would pass away and be

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buried in the churchyard of James Island Presbyterian Church in South Carolina, just next to his younger brother Stiles M. Hinson. *We honor them by remembering them.*

[Reprinted courtesy of RBA Board member **Marc Ramsey**, from The 7th South Carolina Cavalry - To the Defense of Richmond, Broadfoot Publishing Company, 2011] ❖



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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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RICHMOND DISPATCHES – 150 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH

Best preparation for Raids. — The very best preparation, of course, for a raid,--says the Lexington (Virginia) Gazette,--is for the people to remove all their valuables out of the reach of the enemy. This cannot always be done, but there is one article which soldiers always seek after, which is, perhaps, more abundant in this country than it ever was before, --We mean apple brandy, which, it cannot be removed, ought to be poured out by everyone on the approach of the enemy. The Yankees behave bad enough without liquor, but they are ten times worse when they become intoxicated. It would be much better for a man to lose a fine lot of brandy than save it for the Yankees, and lose, in other respects, ten times its value besides, to say nothing of the effect that the drinking would have on their behavior.

- *The Daily Dispatch*: October 22, 1864.

By 1864, vast improvements in the Union Cavalry led to larger and more frequent raids throughout the Old Dominion: Kilpatrick-Dahlgren Raid (Feb); Sheridan's Richmond Raid (May); Sheridan's Trevilian Raid (Jun); Wilson-Kautz Raid (Jun). Though not always successful, these raiding columns of up to 12,000 troopers, certainly alarmed the local citizenry. Apparently, the only thing worse than a Yankee raider was an intoxicated Yankee raider.

Yes!

I WANT TO HELP PRESERVE OUR NATION’S HERITAGE, PLEASE SIGN ME UP.

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