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Saving America's Civil War Battlefields

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**PORT REPUBLIC, IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY OF VIRGINIA...147 YEARS
AGO THIS MONTH, THIS WAS THE SITE OF THE FINAL, DECISIVE BATTLE OF
"STONEWALL" JACKSON'S 1862 VALLEY CAMPAIGN.**

**TODAY, WILL YOU HELP SAVE 178 ACRES OF THE ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL
UNPROTECTED CORE OF THIS BATTLEFIELD, WHILE MULTIPLYING YOUR
GENEROSITY BY \$10-TO-\$1?**

Dear Friend,

Today, you and I have one of those major – MAJOR – historic preservation opportunities that do not come along very often, now within our reach.

As you have no doubt already guessed, you and I have a chance today to save much of the most important part of the battlefield at Port Republic, Virginia, site of the final battle of "Stonewall" Jackson's Valley Campaign.

Here quickly are the particulars of this exciting, important transaction:

Partnering with the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation (SVBF), we are looking to help buy the development rights and preserve forever 178 acres at Port Republic.

Total cost: \$420,000.

But of course, CWPT almost always brings matching grants to bear in any land purchase, and Port Republic is no exception.

In this case, the SVBF is putting in \$140,000 of the price, the Commonwealth of Virginia is putting in \$140,000, and we are applying for an additional federal grant of \$98,000 . . .

. . . leaving CWPT to come up with the final \$42,000 to seal the deal.

I'm no mathematician, but it is easy to see that this is a \$10-to-\$1 match of your donation dollar.

For \$42,000, you and I can save a \$420,000 piece of hallowed ground, and, in the process, build on the crucial preservation progress we have already achieved at Port Republic.

Good economy . . . bad economy . . . ANY economy . . . this is a great

opportunity to save significant land at a vitally important battlefield. I hope you agree.

But don't just take my word for it. Historian Robert K. Krick, author of the book *Conquering the Valley: Stonewall Jackson at Port Republic*, had this to say about this important preservation effort:

“The burly Blue Ridge crowds down toward the newly formed South Fork of the Shenandoah River at the spot where Stonewall Jackson crowned his epic Valley Campaign with the victory at Port Republic on June 9, 1862. The beautiful, verdant river-side meadow on which the battle raged looks today much as it did a century and a half ago. Most of the fighting focused on an alluvial plain within the Kaylor tract. Saving that site for posterity is a matchlessly good idea. Huzzah for the CWPT and SVBF!”

The land that CWPT is helping to preserve today was the key part of the battlefield, the same land over which Union and Confederate soldiers charged and countercharged. Quoting from historian James I. “Bud” Robertson’s standard-setting biography of *Stonewall Jackson*, one Union soldier vividly described a Confederate charge like this:

“Jackson hoped that a grand dash at the Federal center would break it. The ground from mountain to river was then a wheat field, with nothing to obstruct a charge. The great Confederate fighter picked out five regiments of his best troops and hurled them against that wheat field with a shock that made the earth tremble. As sudden as a thunder-peal, artillery boomed, musketry crashed and ten thousand men shouted and cheered. Over the rolling ground – over a barren strip – into the waving wheat marched the men in gray with ranks unbroken. A double line of battle waited their coming with never a tremor. Then sheets of flame leapt over the wheat.”

That field is exactly the ground that we are working to save today.

Even casual students of the Civil War know the importance of Jackson’s Valley Campaign on the War in the east in 1862 . . . how it caused the Union military and political leaders to react with caution, withholding troops from George McClellan’s Peninsula Campaign . . .

. . . how it cemented Jackson’s reputation as a leading general of the era, as his “foot cavalry” seemed to be several places at the same time . . . and how the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia became established as a major theatre of the entire war, which would see even more fighting and devastation in 1864.

Because Jackson won the battle at Port Republic on June 9, 1862, it set into motion Robert E. Lee’s successful effort to drive McClellan away from Richmond. If Jackson had been defeated at Port Republic, McClellan might actually have been able to take Richmond.

So no matter how you look at it, Port Republic is a vitally important place in America’s history that is worthy of our best efforts to save it.

And until about a decade or so ago, not one square inch of this battlefield was preserved. In the late 1990s, CWPT was able to save a few acres at “The Coaling,” the key Union artillery position on the battlefield that almost brought defeat to Jackson at Port Republic.

Then, just a few years ago, CWPT was able to preserve a second major portion of the battlefield.

Today, we can build tremendously on that past success by securing the development rights on this

property, so that it will always look as it does now . . . much as it did on the day Jackson was all over this field.

And the good news is that we can save these crucial 178 acres for a relatively reasonable amount, thanks to all of the matching funds that are coming into play.

Not long ago, I was speaking to a CWPT member who was shocked to hear that there was no National Park Service presence or even a state park at Port Republic.

But as you look at the official CWPT battle map that I have sent to you, you can see that to the extent this significant battlefield has been preserved, it has only been preserved because of you and me.

Plus, our timing could not be better. Every day, the college town of Harrisonburg, Virginia, site of James Madison University, continues to expand. Residential development is relentlessly advancing toward Port Republic and the other near-by battlefield of Cross Keys, where we have also saved key portions of the battlefield.

Every year, it seems there is talk of a major bypass of Interstate 81 – one of the busiest interstates in America for truck traffic – being constructed around Harrisonburg, which threatens to mar the pristine nature of this important historic site.

And as important as this hallowed ground is to save in its own right, it is equally important that we move on it now, as the clock is ticking on the matching funds from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

As you may have heard me mention before, last year, Governor Tim Kaine and Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates created – at CWPT’s request – an unprecedented \$5.2 million fund just to help buy Civil War battlefields in Virginia.

No state has ever put up this much in matching funds before. This was a historic moment for the battlefield preservation movement in America. The only challenging part was that we had to have the \$5.2 million – given out on a \$2-to-\$1 matching basis (we have to raise \$2 to get \$1) committed by December 31, 2009.

That was a tall order, but we felt confident we could do it.

Then, last fall, the economy went down the tubes, and as we have been working to keep the organization going and save what land we can, the clock has been ticking on this “use-it-or-lose-it” Virginia money.

We have already been able to utilize about \$800,000 of the Virginia funds, and this transaction at Port Republic would allow us to tap another \$140,000 of that money.

So this land is worthy of saving for many reasons . . . it is the site of important irreplaceable American history . . . I can take every \$10 you send today and turn it into \$100 . . . we can take advantage of federal AND state matching funds . . . and we continue to build a critical mass at a battlefield that, but for us, would surely be developed before long.

Imagining what Old Stonewall himself might think of this opportunity, he would, of course, first give all the credit to God, but then . . . I think he might just fall back on those famous maxims he began keeping back in his West Point days:

“Frugality – make no expense but to do good to others or yourself: i.e., waste nothing.”

Well, by donating to this effort to save 178 key acres at Port Republic, you are certainly “doing good” to future generations of Americans who will have the benefit of seeing this historic place preserved as it was on the day of the battle.

“Resolution – Resolve to perform what you ought: perform without fail what you resolve.”

You know that saving this hallowed ground, on which 1,800 men fell as casualties, is something we “ought” to do, and I’m absolutely “resolved” to do it!

“Industry – Lose no time; be always employed in something useful.”

As I mentioned, we certainly need to match as much of that Virginia matching money as soon as possible, or state legislators could take it away to spend on other state programs. What a lost opportunity that would be!

At our \$10-to-\$1 match, you can help preserve a full acre at Port Republic for \$236, a half-acre for \$118 or even a quarter-acre for just \$59. Or, you can save two acres for \$472, three acres for \$708 or five acres for \$1,180.

With 90 percent of the funding for this hallowed ground already lined up, please be as generous as you can today to help me raise CWPT’s final share of \$42,000.

Please join me in this crucial effort today. Thank you, and as Jackson might have said, “Let God grant our arms with victory at Port Republic.”

Still fighting to save our history,

Jim Lighthizer
President

P.S. Great news!! CWPT’s new website redesign is up and running. Please go to www.civilwar.org and take a look around. So much of the site has been improved and updated, it is a whole new experience. For example, if you go to www.civilwar.org/portrepublic09, you will not only be able to see additional maps, photos and other resources about this preservation effort, you’ll also be able to get more information about what we’ve already done at that site, explore links to related topics, and donate securely on-line, putting your donation to immediate use.

I’m not a terribly computer-literate person, but I’ll tell you what, the new CWPT website is neat! Every click takes you to great historical information and important preservation updates.

And . . . if haven’t yet watched the animated battle maps we have there, you are missing something great. Everyone who has seen them has just raved about them, and how they help you understand the battle in brand new ways. You gotta see them!

This is all you need to know: www.civilwar.org. Many thanks!