



Civil War Preservation Trust

Saving America's Civil War Battlefields

James Lighthizer
President

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Dear Friend,

It has been called the Confederacy's "Black Thursday."

No, it was not a day when the Confederate stock market crashed, and investors lost most of their money . . .

. . . but it was a day when Robert E. Lee lost eight generals, 300 supply wagons and 7,700 men, nearly 25 percent of his army.

The date was April 6, 1865, and the place was Sailor's Creek, Virginia.

And it was the battle that finally, after four years of war unlike anything ever seen on this planet before, decided the fate of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.

At the midpoint in both time and geography between the Union breakthrough at Petersburg on April 2 and Lee's surrender at Appomattox on April 9, Sailor's Creek was the blow from which the reeling Confederates could never recover.

If you are anything like me, you have tried to imagine the bone-crushing weariness of the half-starved Confederates as they plodded westward - day and night - fighting running battles all along the way.

You have wondered how energized the Union soldiers must have felt as they sensed that this time - *this time* - they might really beat "Bobby Lee" for good, and that home was suddenly closer than it had been for many years.

And you know that the short-in-duration-but-large-in-significance Appomattox Campaign is one of the most important of the entire war, worthy of our best efforts to save the land where its battles were fought.

Today, you and I have an exciting opportunity to save an additional 35 acres at Sailor's Creek, adding to the more than

600 acres we have already helped preserve there.

As you can see, even though times are tough, I have not scrimped on sending you an official full-color battle map of this site; I believe very strongly in showing you, as precisely as I can, exactly what you are getting for your generous support.

Let us go back in time to the Battle of Sailor's Creek. This is where the wheels really began to fall off for Lee.

The Confederates started the day, the sixth of April, with nearly 30,000 men in the ranks; at sundown, two wings of the army were widely separated and more than 7,700 of those men were killed, wounded or captured, including eight generals, and Lee's load was lightened by more than 300 supply wagons taken by the Federals. This is where Lee exclaimed, "My God! Has the army been dissolved?!"

As you can clearly see, saving this land would be a very significant accomplishment because with this purchase, when added to the state battlefield park that is already there (containing over 600 acres CWPT helped save), this battlefield will be nearly completely preserved!

Think about that a second . . . once again, you and I will be within reach of a fully preserved Civil War battlefield! How many people can say they did that in their lives?

Pardon me . . . I got so carried away with the history, I almost forgot the best part - the purchase price is a very reasonable \$106,000 - and if all goes well, I should be able to find matching fund sources for all but \$18,000 of it!

And while I briefly explain what I mean by "if all goes well," let me give you an updated status report on the current state of CWPT's operations:

That April 6th, Lee watched his army dissolve away, losing nearly 25 percent of his strength in just one day . . .

. . . just as many of us watched last year as we lost that much or more from our home values, pensions, retirement and investment accounts.

Thanks to the generosity of thousands of stalwart CWPT members, our revenues were down "only" about 15% last year - certainly not as bad as some people had it, but it still puts us behind the eight-ball for preservation activities this year.

And of course, no one knows what tomorrow will bring. But, unlike Lee, things are not nearly so bleak that CWPT has to consider "surrender," not by a long shot - again, thanks to good folks like you.

In 1865, Lee lost many crucial supplies in those 300 wagons, resources

he needed to keep his army in the field.

In 2008, CWPT lost many crucial resources too, as many members have told us they simply can't donate until the economy turns around, whenever that happens.

But the battlefields remain threatened . . . and while the developers may not be building at the furious pace they were before, they are still looking for large tracts of open land they can buy at depressed prices, which they can hold onto until the economy does come back.

So while "surrender" is not an option, a certain amount of "re-trenching" is necessary.

Reality Number 1 for 2009: Federal matching money is going to be harder than ever to find.

Even with all of the various federal bail-out and economic stimulus programs out there, very little - if any - will be available for historic battlefield preservation.

Okay, fine. While we will never give up our efforts to secure federal matching grants wherever we can - which have been the lifeblood of our efforts for more than 10 years - we must also utilize every other available funding resource available.

Reality Number 2 for 2009: The main source for matching funds this year is going to be the \$5.2 million the Commonwealth of Virginia made available last year . . .

. . . and which we must match this year \$1-for-\$2 - anything we don't match will go back to the state, which is seeing its own financial crisis, as are most states.

I'll bet I know what you are thinking right now, because it's something we hear from time to time . . .

"Jim, isn't CWPT already too focused on saving land in Virginia? Shouldn't we be looking for other opportunities?"

My first response to that is that CWPT has saved crucial hallowed ground at Ft. Donelson, Shiloh, Champion Hill, Bentonville and Morris Island, all within the past year.

However, with limited matching funds to use around the country; with Virginia being the largest source of available funds; with the tighter-than-a-drumhead deadline of matching these funds before the end of this year; and with battlefields still highly endangered from one end of the state to the other, yes, we may have to be a little more Virginia-centric in 2009 than we have been in years past.

This doesn't mean we will ignore other states. Tennessee, for example,

looks like it will make some matching grants available, and we always have literally dozens of potential purchases all around the country "in the pipeline," in various stages of negotiation.

But to be good stewards of your generosity, the CWPT Board of Trustees and I simply believe that we are duty-bound to maximize every dollar entrusted to us to do the most good. I hope - I pray - that you agree.

Quickly back to Sailor's Creek: Of the \$106,000 purchase price, we can use \$35,000 (33 percent) of the Virginia matching money, leaving us with \$71,000 to raise. Although it may be a long shot, we are going ahead and applying for an additional \$53,000 matching grant from the federal Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program.

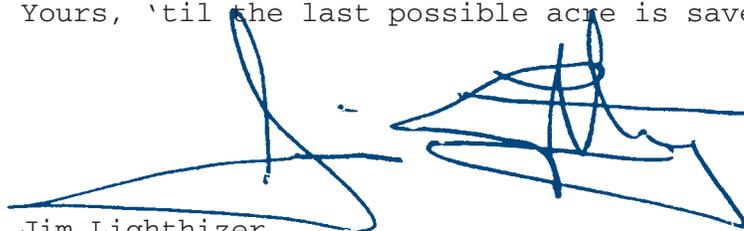
If we get the federal grant, that means you and I can save this part of the Sailor's Creek battlefield for just \$18,000! That would mean every dollar you donate to this effort today will be worth \$5.89!

(If we don't get the federal match, then we will have to raise the \$71,000, a tall order to be sure, but we've tackled larger challenges than this together.)

I hope this brief report has been helpful to you, and I hope that you will be able to stand with me and fight for this important battlefield today, and in the days to come.

Thank you for your dedication and support of our mission of saving America's irreplaceable history and heritage.

Yours, 'til the last possible acre is saved,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Lighthizer". The signature is stylized and somewhat abstract, with a large loop on the left side and a more complex, scribbled structure on the right.

Jim Lighthizer
President

P.S. As always, I encourage you to go to our web page for this appeal at www.civilwar.org/sailorscreek09 for even more in-depth information, historic background, photos, maps and more.

Plus, mark your calendar now - next month on Wednesday, March 18, Academy Award-winning actor Richard Dreyfuss will join me in releasing CWPT's 2009 Most Endangered Battlefields Report in Washington, DC. If you can't be with us in Washington, please visit our website for extensive coverage of this major preservation event. Thank you again for your on-going dedication and support!