

Central Virginia Battlefields Trust Expands Protection of Pelham's Corner

By Tom Van Winkle

Director of Communications CVBT

Schooled at West Point young John Pelham resigned from the academy to side with the South in 1861. During the battle of Fredericksburg on December 13th 1862, the Young Major artilleryman, under the cover of an early morning fog, positioned two cannons far in advance of the Confederate lines on the flank of the Union which was preparing to attack towards Stonewall Jackson's position across Slaughter Pen farm. One of his guns was quickly silenced but with one lone remaining Napoleon canon Pelham held up the Union assault for nearly two hours. Robert E. Lee while observing the fight from Prospect Hill remarked "It is glorious to see such courage in one so young".

Pelham's Corner is located at the intersection of modern day routes 2/17 and Benchmark road and has long been memorialized where Pelham made his valiant stand that morning. The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust (CVBT) sought to preserve this site early on but the property owner had intentions of developing the historic crossroads. In 1999 the CVBT purchased two small nearby parcels equating to 0.63 acres that were of negligible importance. The intent was to use them for some future advantage.

One of the area's largest developers, the Silver Companies, purchased the significant corner several years later and the discussion of a land swap between the CVBT and the developer commenced. In 2007 the Silver Companies transferred title of this historical corner site to the CVBT for the swap of our two tiny lots thus preserving a small piece of Pelham's Corner.

Now in 2015 the CVBT and the Silver Companies have been working on yet another avenue to further protect this historical land. A generous donation from the Silver Companies has now increased the CVBT's holdings at Pelham's Corner from one acre to a total of four and a half acres. The donated property consists of over three and a half acres of valuable commercially zoned land. Adjacent to our current Pelham's Corner site where CVBT placed a replica Napoleon canon, this additional area protects over two hundred feet of road frontage. The original plan for this parcel prior to our acquisition called for a twenty one hundred square foot multi-tenant building. This land is now protected from any future development.

The CVBT is very grateful to the Silver Companies for their willingness to work with us to protect this land so future generations may walk the ground and better understand what occurred on this historic site.

While the surrounding area has been developed, this critical area is now owned by the CVBT, it will be maintained as a key component to the understanding of the Fredericksburg battlefield.

With well over one thousand acres of endangered Civil War battlefields protected to date the CVBT continues our mission to preserve our history and with 2016 being our twenty year anniversary we are positioned to add to that total.

Central Virginia Battlefields Trust: www.cvbt.org