



Shenandoah Valley
Battlefields Foundation

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The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields
Foundation is the managing entity of the
federally designated Shenandoah Valley
Battlefields National Historic District.

KEVEN M. WALKER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dear Fellow Preservationist,

I need your help to raise \$100,000 to move us closer to the finish line on a project that you and I began five years ago. Over \$400,000 still stands between us and the preservation of the West Woods on the Third Winchester Battlefield. We need to raise a minimum of 25% of that in order to make a significant payment and keep this project from falling off the rails.

Of all the battles fought in the Shenandoah Valley none was larger or took more of a human toll than the Third Battle of Winchester. **And of all the projects that you and I have tackled together, preserving the West Woods, site of constant fighting for over ten hours during that battle, has been one of the most complicated and expensive – and one of the most critical and important.**

Preserving this site protects what is probably the most intensely fought over parcel of ground that we have ever attempted to preserve. We have raised private donations; have leveraged the extreme generosity of the landowner; secured significant grants; and enlisted the support of partner organizations... but we aren't there yet. **As it always does, it all comes down to you.**

In this appeal we are trying to raise \$100,000, one-fourth of the total amount that we need to ultimately complete the project. If we can do that – and if we can do it again once a year for the next three years – **you and I will have saved a property that everyone thought was lost;** a property that was slated for commercial development; the last vestige of the most fought over woodlot in the Shenandoah Valley.

We have come up against one obstacle after another in our attempts to preserve this property, not the least of which is the value. This was a property valued at over five million dollars. The landowner worked with us for months and agreed to donate 50% of the value – a phenomenal gift, especially considering that this was not derelict, unbuildable property; this was property slated for development at one of the busiest intersections in one of the fastest growing communities in Virginia. Our federal grants have been delayed from the very beginning, and are now mired in an accounting review that is holding up and bringing into question our final \$716,000

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request. And because a condition of our purchase of this property was that we close immediately, we financed the project - and due to the delay in federal grants, we have incurred significant interest, adding to the cost of this project.

Listen – I rolled the dice within months of coming onboard with the Battlefields Foundation, risking my new position and the financial stability of the entire organization to get this done. I literally bet it all on my faith in what you and I can accomplish together, and I'd do it again because someone had to try to save this woodlot before it was lost – and we were the only ones willing to do it. Take a look at the historic sketch that I've asked Terry to pull together and have included in this letter. When you do, you'll be reminded of just how important this parcel of ground really is. Look at the drawing across the top of Terry's write up. It's an image of Ricketts men as they charged out of a ravine and into the West Woods – on land that this project will forever preserve.

And in conjunction with this preservation campaign, we have exciting news – and an exciting offer.

In an effort to bring renewed attention to the West Woods and its importance, we're offering the opportunity for each of you to own a limited edition, artist-signed print of a painting by Jeff Trexler that was just completed to support this preservation effort. **This is the first painting depicting any part of the Third Battle of Winchester that has been completed in over 100 years!** The painting was commissioned, at no small cost, and on our behalf, by Cmdr. Craig Morin, and the original was unveiled last month during events commemorating the battle's anniversary. If you look at the flyer I have included in this envelope, you can see this amazing depiction of General Robert Rodes (with his blue headquarters flag behind him) ordering his men into the West Woods – and get the details on how you can secure a print of your own. These limited-edition artist-signed prints will never be for sale. The only way you will ever own one is by putting your shoulder to the wheel and helping us save the West Woods.

That's exactly what Cmdr. Morin has done. He saw an ad we posted on Facebook in 2015 about our efforts to save the West Woods. He had ancestors that had fought there and was writing a book on Robert Rodes and so he was interested in our project. He asked to meet with staff onsite and flew from Texas to tour the battlefield and specifically the West Woods. He had never been involved with us before, but when he got home he sent us a significant contribution, and has been sending contributions to save the West Woods almost every month since that first visit five years ago. During that time he became extremely involved in all of our efforts. He's erected two monuments on our battlefields; has spearheaded the creation of our library and archives; has worked behind the scenes to help secure hundreds of thousands of dollars of support; has taken over and reinvigorated our Education and Interpretation committee; and is serving his

second term on our board of Trustees. This painting is his attempt to remind you what happened in the West Woods and why we need to save this woodlot for all time. He and I need you to keep in this fight and help us reach our goal of \$100,000 as we continue to fight for this property.

It is interesting to me that, in a strange twist of fate, what is **arguably the single most fought over parcel of ground in the Shenandoah Valley** – the one that was the scene of intense fighting for over 10 hours during Third Winchester – would be the parcel that has taken us the longest and cost us the most in our attempt to preserve it. We must push through, and scrape and claw with all of our might for every inch of this parcel of woods – with every bit as much determination as those who struggled for this ground 156 years ago. **We simply cannot lose the West Woods.** It is hallowed by the blood of Tar Heels and Tigers; of fresh-faced sons of the Empire State and boys from the Connecticut coast. Virginians and Alabamians; Ohioans and Pennsylvanians laid down their lives on this parcel in a struggle to answer the greatest Constitutional questions our nation has ever faced.

And we have a chance to save it. A chance to protect it forever as a place of remembrance and learning – **ONE chance to keep it from being lost.** I am not ashamed to say that I will keep coming back to you with my plea for assistance until we pay the final dollar and we can rest... secure in the knowledge that the West Woods will forever stand as a monument to the Americans who fought and died there.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Keven M. Walker", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Keven M. Walker