

AMERICA'S HISTORY

Group Fights To Preserve U.S. Battlefields

(NAPSA)—While the Civil War is long over, a new struggle is being waged over whether the battlefields where the war was fought will be preserved.

Many of the sites where the most significant battles of the war took place are threatened by plans for commercial and residential development.

Fortunately, a national non-profit organization is working to preserve the remaining sites. Known as the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT), it contends that a strip mall or subdivision can be built practically anywhere. A historic battlefield, however, cannot.

CWPT also argues that battlefields require no costly infrastructure and, unlike many commercial ventures, once preserved become permanent Economic resources.

Not only do battlefields provide a tangible link to the community's past, they also serve as tourist destinations. This tourist traffic can be an important income-generator for states and municipalities.

For example, the Commonwealth of Virginia recently conducted a study demonstrating the value of Civil War tourism to the state. The study found that the average pleasure tourist to Virginia spends \$288 per visit. In contrast, the average Civil War tourist spent \$551 per visit. Moreover, while only 18 percent of all tourists stayed in the state 4 days or longer, 41 percent of Civil War visitors tarried four days or more.

CWPT has released a list of ten sites it considers the most endangered. Many are threatened because of their proximity to major roads—often the very same roads



Stones River battlefield, near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, is one of the most threatened battlefields in America.

fought over by the blue and the gray. Other battlefields are likely victims of “urban sprawl.”

The list includes:

- Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where a proposed new visitor center has the potential to spur commercial development along the Baltimore Pike, one of the key arteries used by the armies during the battle.

- Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, where a 188-home development threatens the site of Confederate General Stonewall Jackson' siege of this historic town.

- Stones River, Tennessee, where expansion of the city of Murfreesboro and a proposed highway interchange are expected to further fragment this historic site.

Over the years, CWPT has helped preserve almost 11,000 acres of battlefield land at more than 60 sites in 16 states.

The group also promotes educational programs and heritage tourism initiatives to inform the public about the war and the fundamental conflicts that sparked it.

To learn more about CWPT and how it works, visit its Web site at www.civilwar.org, or call 888-606-1400.