

# Preserving America's Sacred Ground

by Glenn F. Williams  
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**W**hat are battlefields? In the United States, they are places to commemorate historic military engagements, and honor the memory of people, both as individuals and in groups, for significant deeds. Battlefields are artifacts, primary sources in their own right, as well as the repositories of evidence found in archeological resources. Battlefields are places to formally and informally study, teach or learn about the past, and apply lessons to gain insight on the problems of the present or future. Battlefields are also venues for rewarding jobs in public history, both for interpreting as well as saving them.

Although considered "hallowed ground," the one thing that battlefields ARE NOT is protected. When commercial development threatened to destroy 540 acres of historically significant land outside the boundaries of Manassas National Battlefield Park in 1988, historians, preservationists, local officials, and interested citizens pressured the federal government to take action. The fight was a bitter one that pitted those who wanted to preserve the historic site against their equally well-intentioned neighbors who favored economic growth by developing what they perceived as available landscape. Ultimately, in a reflection of renewed interest in the nation's past and the rise in the popularity and potential economic advantage of heritage tourism, public opinion favored preservation. The matter was resolved when Congress voted to acquire the contested land and add it to the park. Although a victory, the multi-million dollar price made it an expensive lesson. In 1990, to preclude a repeat of the costly and divisive procedure, then Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan, Jr., and Congress created the American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) within the National Park Service (NPS).

Congress also appointed the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission (CWSAC), and asked it to report on the condition of the nation's Civil War battlefields. The Commission's 1993 report identified hundreds of battlefields that, although historically significant, were in danger of being lost to continued residential and commercial development. In addition, it was noted that the sites of combat during pre-independence colonial armed conflicts, the American Revolution, War of 1812, Mexican-American War, Indian Wars, and battles among native peoples were equally endangered. With over 3,000 sites of historic military engagements across the nation, the NPS could not expect to care for them all, nor could the taxpayers save them from destruction through the acquisition of real estate. In response, Congress passed the American Battlefield Preservation Act of 1996, "to assist citizens, public and private institutions, and governments at all levels in planning, interpreting, and protecting sites where historic battles were fought on American soil during the armed conflicts that shaped the growth and development of the United States, in order that present and future generations may learn and gain inspiration from the ground where Americans made their ultimate sacrifice."



Historic Preservation Planner, Tanya Gossett; Archeologist, Kristen Stevens; ABPP Chief, Paul Hawke; Landscape Architect, Kathryn Schlegel (Northeast Regional Support Office); Historian, Connie Langum (Wilson's Creek National Battlefield); and Historian, Glenn Williams.

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To implement the new law, the ABPP assists those historic military sites that are not units of NPS. The ABPP encourages partnerships between the federally operated battlefield parks and other preservation organizations and government agencies. Members of the staff assist state, local, and tribal governments, nonprofit historical and historic preservation organizations, and educational institutions with a variety of projects to identify, preserve and interpret historic battlefields. This assistance comes in many forms, from fielding inquiries from the office, conducting site visits, and presenting training workshops for audiences of various sizes, to hosting regional and national conferences. In addition, the ABPP administers a project grant program that can help facilitate the protection of battlefields at the grass roots level. Once these grants are awarded, the ABPP staff then coaches and assists those conducting the projects to their successful completion. Grants are awarded, for example, to perform historical research, archeological surveys, and cultural resource inventories, prepare nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, develop preservation, education and interpretive plans, programs and materials, and hold public awareness and consensus-building campaigns. Grant applications are accepted for projects for battles from any war fought on American soil or in territorial waters, regardless of the combatants' nationalities, if they demonstrate how the work will enhance the preservation of the historic resource.

The ABPP staff also conducts studies and other projects associated with the identification, preservation and interpretation of battlefield land. The staff is currently completing a Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Historic Preservation Study for Congress, and is frequently asked to contribute to other NPS projects, such as proposals for National Historic Trails or Heritage Areas, that incorporate sites or themes with military history implications or that involve battlefield parks. The ABPP also operates an "Ask a Historian" program for public inquiries, distributes instructional

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## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Frederick Augustyn, <i>Greenbelt, MD</i>	Rebecca Layton, <i>Chicago, IL</i>
Randy Bergstrom, <i>Santa Barbara, CA</i>	Carolyn Maciolek, <i>Chicago, IL</i>
Mauricio Borrero, <i>Jamaica, NY</i>	Marylou Marshall, <i>Cupertino, CA</i>
California Polytech State University, <i>San Luis Obispo, CA</i>	Michael Mizel-Nelson, <i>New Orleans, LA</i>
CNRS-IHTP Bibliotheque, <i>Cachan Cedex, France</i>	National Capital Commission, <i>Ottawa, ON</i>
Columbia College Library, <i>Chicago, IL</i>	Robert Nickel, <i>Las Vegas, NV</i>
Julie Corley, <i>Hercules, CA</i>	Charles Palmer, <i>Las Vegas, NV</i>
Debbie Doyle, <i>Washington, DC</i>	Joanne Riley, <i>Brookline, MA</i>
Sylvi Elliot, <i>Anchorage, AK</i>	Chick Russell, <i>Pasadena, CA</i>
Gaile Evans, <i>Astoria, OR</i>	Jonathan Souther, <i>Cleveland, OH</i>
Susan Fite, <i>College Park, MD</i>	Justin Snider, <i>Pierre, SD</i>
Michael Hollander, <i>Chicago, IL</i>	Rebecca Vial, <i>Maryville, TN</i>
Katrina Kupricka, <i>Las Cruces, NM</i>	Roger Burns-Watson, <i>Bethany, WV</i>

## Thank you, Heather, Kate, Rikki, and Sam

For years, NCPH members have seen their work, but have not known their names. These individuals have played an important role of putting a public face on NCPH and contributing to the daily operations and outreach of NCPH, but you have never met them. Sam Mattes, Rikki Spring, Kate Voss, and Heather Zoellick of IUPUI's Campus Design staff have been the creative spirits behind our NCPH publications, most notably our quarterly newsletter *Public History News*, but also our annual meeting programs, membership brochures, and other printed materials that the Executive Offices generate. These individuals have provided excellent services to NCPH (as well as to thousands of other customers!) over the years—offering design ideas; coordinating the production of newsletters; preparing promotional materials; and handling far too many last minute “rush jobs” with smiles on their faces.

As of 30 June 2004, these good friends of NCPH will lose their positions at the university as the administration closes down Campus Design in a cost-cutting move. Print and design functions will be outsourced to a local private firm.

With the departure of these individuals, NCPH – and I – will be losing good friends and colleagues—ones who have been there constantly to assist NCPH. So, on behalf of NCPH, I wish to extend our thanks to Kate, Heather, Sam, and Rikki, for all that they have done for NCPH over these many years. Best wishes in wherever your careers lead you. You will be missed!

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NPS literature on battlefield preservation, and publishes a newsletter, *Battlefield Update*.

In addition, the ABPP administers an acquisition grant program, using funds appropriated from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). These grants are presently available for the purchase of real estate containing the sites of Civil War engagements from willing sellers by local or state government entities, or by nonprofit organizations in partnership with them. Legislation that would establish a similar acquisition grant program for battlefields of the Revolutionary War and War of 1812 is currently being considered in Congress.

Since 1990, the ABPP has assisted hundreds of individuals and groups, and awarded several million dollars to help protect more than 100 battlefields in several states, territories and the District of Columbia. To accomplish this vital and rewarding task, the ABPP currently consists of a core staff of five members in its Washington, DC, office. These include four public history professionals, all holding advanced degrees, with a program chief and three planners, representing the disciplines of archeology, historic preservation and history, and an Information Technology administrator, who manages

the Comprehensive American Battlefield Information Network (CABIN) database. The team is augmented by a battlefield park historian and a landscape architect, both of whom also hold advanced degrees, adding their talents to ABPP in addition to their primary duties elsewhere, as regional representatives. Battlefield preservation presents a rewarding venue for public historians to practice their craft.

Glenn is the staff Historian for the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP). He joined the ABPP staff in April 2001 after serving as the Historian and Exhibit Curator of USS Constellation Museum in Baltimore, MD, from 1999 to 2001. Prior to that, he was Assistant Curator of the Baltimore Civil War Museum – President Street Station in Baltimore, and a research Historian with the Army Historical Foundation in Arlington, VA, both as a volunteer. He entered public history as a second career after completing over twenty years of active military service in 1996.

Glenn holds a BA in History from Loyola College of Maryland, a MA in History, with a certificate in Public History, from the University of Maryland Baltimore County, and is currently enrolled in the Ph.D. program in History at University of Maryland, College Park. His publications include a book, and several journal and magazine articles on military and naval history topics.