



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area Association Celebrates Historic Kirkby Farm Being Protected Permanently by Conservation Easement

**Middleburg, Virginia, November 12, 2021**—The Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area Association (VPHA) is pleased to announce that Mary Welby Brown, Mary Welby McGill, Lucy Brown Armstrong, and James L. Armstrong have placed their historic Kirkby Farm outside of Upperville under a permanent conservation easement with the Old Dominion Land Conservancy (ODLC). VPHA contributed towards the stewardship costs associated with the easement with a distribution from its Bondi Family Land Conservation and Battlefield Preservation Fund.



The historic significance of this property cannot be understated. During the Battle of Unison, the 190-acre property saw sporadic cavalry skirmishing on Nov. 3, 1862, as the 9<sup>th</sup> VA Cavalry engaged in a slow retreat down Trappe Road, being pursued by the 8<sup>th</sup> PA Cavalry. This was part of a successful tactic by J.E.B. Stuart to delay the Federal advance long enough to screen the movements of Gen. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, which resulted in Lincoln's removal of Gen. McClellan from command. ODLC Executive Director Henry Stribling remarked, "We are excited to assist with the permanent protection of this historic property for future generations, including the preservation of the all-important battlefields."

The Kirkby property featured even more prominently the following year during the prelude to Gettysburg in the late stages of the Battle of Upperville on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1863. During the battle a large column of US cavalry pushed their rebel counterparts west along the Ashby's Gap Turnpike (Route 50) while another column under the command of Gen. John Buford maneuvered across the fields and lanes north of the turnpike. As Buford's men advanced, Confederate cavalry under Gen. John Chambliss deployed along Trappe Road and in the surrounding fields. The two sides engaged in vicious fighting around the stone farmhouse (known as the Thomas Farm) and in the intervening fields. Confederate artillery fire from the north side of the farm had a devastating impact on the advancing Union troops. Fighting raged back and forth across the farm until a final push by Union cavalry under Col. Thomas Devin drove the remaining rebels south and west towards Ashby's Gap. The battle around the Thomas Farm and Trappe Road cost the Union army 88 men killed or wounded while Confederate casualties were between 50 and 100 men killed or wounded.

The Kirkby property also has tremendous natural resource and open space values. The property has over a half-mile of frontage on Trappe Road, is adjacent to three other properties under conservation easement, and contains excellent agricultural soils (over 80% of the property). The farm also contains over a half-mile of Pantherskin Creek, as well as dozens of acres of associated floodplain and wetlands.

The Bondi Family Fund has also assisted with easement costs with the Land Trust of Virginia for the Ellis-Cohen property and eastern parcel of Corotoman, both located in the core of the Unison Battlefield. VPHA additionally contributed funds to the easement costs of the Battle of Upperville/County Park in Fauquier County site and Walker's Hill in Waterford. Information on the Bondi Family Fund can be found at [www.piedmontheritage.org](http://www.piedmontheritage.org).

*The mission of the Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area Association is Preservation through Education—to educate about the history and advocate for the preservation of the extraordinary historic landscape, culture, and scenery in the Northern Virginia Piedmont for future generations to enjoy. For more information, visit [www.piedmontheritage.org](http://www.piedmontheritage.org)*