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Harpers Ferry among endangered Civil War sites

■ The site is one of the 10 most threatened battlefields according to a recent study.

By BEN EVANS

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON — Plans for a casino just outside Gettysburg, Pa., were shot down last year, but the site of the Civil War's bloodiest battle still is threatened by rapidly spreading home construction, according to a preservation group's annual inventory of endangered battlefields.

So is a battleground outside Harpers Ferry which was added to the list this year after a developer dug 45-foot-wide trenches for water and sewer lines that would serve thousands of new homes.

A site in Alabama's Mobile Bay is suffering from neglect and a lack of state funding, and vast tracts of land stretching from Virginia to Pennsylvania are at risk from a planned major power line, the Civil War Preservation Trust said.

"Tens of thousands of valiant young Americans still lie entombed in those fields," Charlie Wilson, a former Texas congressman who backed federal spending on Civil War land preservation, said

CIVIL WAR PRESERVATION TRUST'S TOP SIX MOST ENDANGERED BATTLEFIELDS

WASHINGTON — The Civil War Preservation Trust's list of the 10 most endangered Civil War battlefields, in alphabetical order:

CEDAR CREEK (Va.) — An early morning, surprise attack by Confederate troops here in 1864 nearly reversed momentum after a string of Southern defeats in the Shenandoah Valley. But the federal army launched a crushing counterattack and won the battle.

FORT MORGAN (Ala.) — Completed in 1834, this fort in Mobile Bay was the last big holdout as Union ships and troops ultimately shut down the Confederate-held port in 1864's Battle of Mobile Bay. It also was used in the Spanish-American War and both world wars.

GETTYSBURG (Pa.) — The 1863 battle here was the war's bloodiest with some 51,000 casualties and marked a

turning point in the war, ending Robert E. Lee's Confederate push into the North. It also is the site where President Lincoln delivered his famous address.

HARPERS FERRY (W.Va.) — The site of John Brown's failed slave rebellion also saw an 1862 battle in which Maj. Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson surrounded and captured a 12,500-man Union garrison.

IUKA (Miss.) — This Union victory in 1862 came after a pitched battle raged for hours and required Union reinforcements to arrive the next morning.

MARIETTA (Ga.) — Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's Union army drove Confederate soldiers out of several strategic positions, including Kennesaw, outside Atlanta in 1864.

The Associated Press

at a news conference Tuesday. "It is truly hallowed ground."

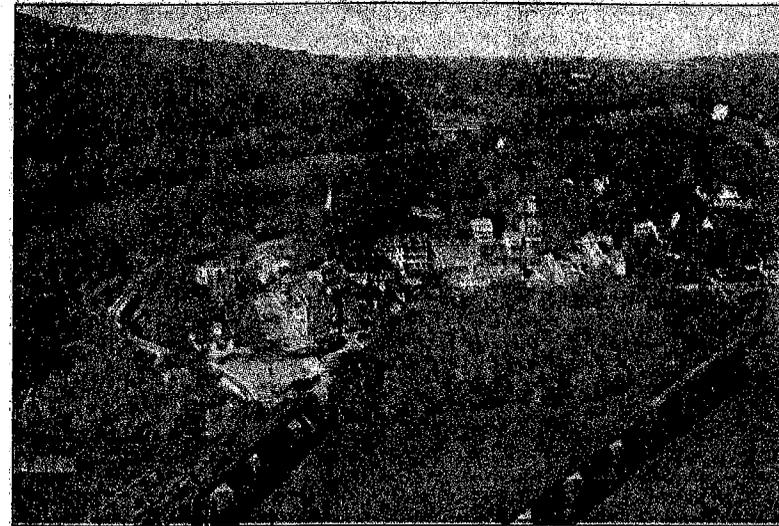
The report also names Civil War locations in Louisiana, Georgia, Maryland, Tennessee and Mississippi, with suburban sprawl the most common problem.

Around Marietta, Ga., where Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's Union army drove Confederate soldiers out of several strategic positions in 1864, the group cited large networks of trenches and other fortifications that remain unprotected.

Some of the sites already have been damaged, and they are likely to succumb soon to Atlanta's development pressures, the group said.

Sprawl was also cited as a threat in Spring Hill, Tenn., and elsewhere.

The trust refreshes the list every year based on military significance, the urgency of threats and location. It boasts of saving more than 23,000 acres in 18 states by raising money and leveraging government funding to buy land or



Journal file photo

A view of historic Harpers Ferry from Maryland Heights, Md.

preservation easements.

Harpers Ferry — best known for John Brown's failed effort to arm and free local slaves — changed hands eight times during the Civil War and was the site of an 1862 battle in which Confederate Maj. Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson won the surrender of some 12,500 Union troops.

Joy Oakes, senior regional director with the National Parks Conservation

Association, called Harpers Ferry a "living classroom of America's Civil War" whose scenic beauty and historical integrity are in jeopardy.

A proposed annexation and rezoning under review by the city of Charles Town would allow "incompatible, intensive development on high-value historic lands" and undermine millions of dollars' worth of investments to preserve the park, she said.