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# Signal Hill Is Bought To Save It

By LEE FLOR  
Star-News Staff Writer

Signal Hill, a historic site which played a crucial role in the First Battle of Bull Run during the Civil War, has been purchased from a private developer by the Nature Conservancy.

The conservancy, a nationally recognized nonprofit organization, will hold the land until the Town of Manassas Park can put together a financial package of federal grants and local funds to buy the site and several other parcels of land nearby for a buffer zone around Signal Hill.

The Town of Manassas Park at first had planned to buy the 13-acre Signal Hill site by itself, and gave the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Earl W. Hurst Jr., \$10,000 as a down payment. Its option-purchase agreement called for a final price of \$110,000.

The Nature Conservancy pointed out, however, that it would take time to process applications and put through paperwork for a federal grant for park and open space funds. Therefore, it advanced the \$110,000 and bought the site last week.

**THE TOWN** and the Nature Conservancy were in a hurry because the land had been surveyed and percolation tests made. Hurst, who has a reputation in Prince William County for building high-quality homes, was preparing to sell the lots.

Signal Hill sits high above Manassas, and Confederates from that site were able to command several key fords in the Bull Run. There was a signal tower there, and on the Sunday morning of July 21, 1861, a Confederate officer saw a Union force making a march several miles west, attempting to outflank a Confederate force at Sudley Ford.

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The signal officer, using flags, signaled to Confederate Brigade Commander Nathan G. Evans, "look out for your left—you are turned."

Evans and other Confederate leaders shifted their forces and the Union Army suffered some 2,986 casualties at Bull Run that day.

**MANASSAS PARK** got into the act after Mayor Roger Costello and Prince William County Supervisor C. Scott Winfield discovered in September that the hill was about to be sold for one-acre prestige home sites. Federal, state and county agencies were unable to move swiftly enough to protect the site so the Town of Manassas Park put up the initial downpayment to hold the land.

Now the town wants to work out a cooperative plan with other jurisdictions to establish a regional park in the Signal Hill area.

David A. Morine, director of the Nature Conservancy's eastern regional office in Arlington, said his organization was "pleased to come to the assistance of the Town of Manassas Park and the citizens of the region in helping in the acquisition of Signal Hill."

The conservancy's cooperative program was set up to provide just this sort of aid and has been instrumental in the completion of scores of projects throughout the United States at the local, state and federal government level," he said.



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