

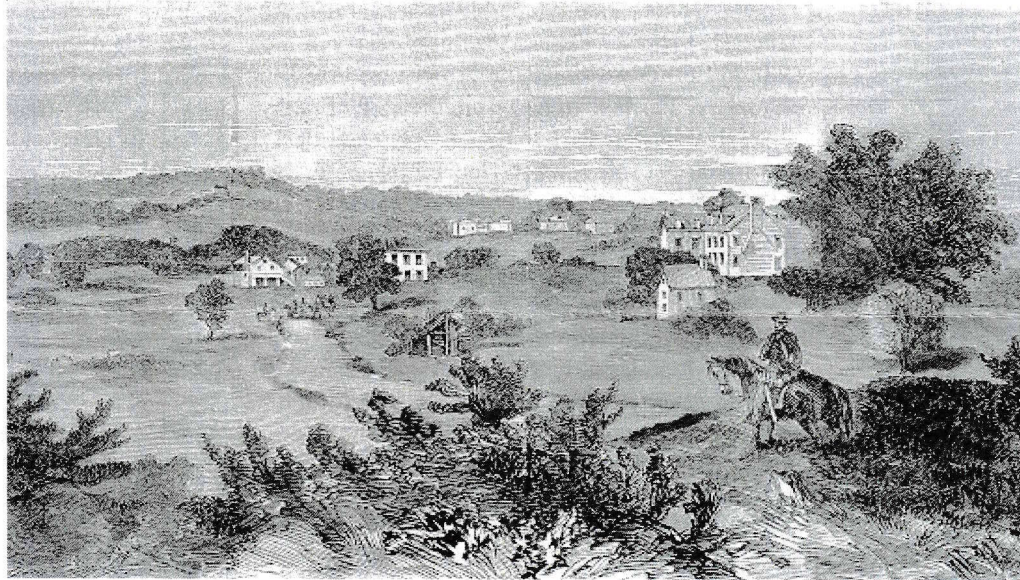
Prince William Forest Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Prince William Forest Park
Triangle, Virginia



The Civil War and the Quantico Valley



“Dumfries, Virginia - From a Sketch by Mr. A.R. Waud,” *Harper's Weekly*, 29 August 1863.

Between Two Capitals

In April of 1861, unionism and secession were topics of great interest to free and enslaved residents of the area near Dumfries, Virginia that became Prince William Forest Park in 1933. Thirty miles (48 km) to Dumfries' north was the federal district of Washington, the United States capital. Seventy miles to the south of Dumfries (113 km) was Richmond, the capital of Virginia and, from May of 1861, the capital of the embryonic Confederate States of America. How did secession and war affect those people living near Dumfries and the Quantico Creek?

The Quantico Valley in 1861

When Confederate forces attacked the United States garrison at Fort Sumter in South Carolina in April of 1861, Prince William County was an agricul-

claimed Dumfries as their closest post office in the 1860 federal census.

tural area, home to almost 600 farms and approximately 8,600 people. Nearly 2,400 were enslaved laborers of African ancestry; they comprised nearly 28% of the county's population. Dumfries, the only town of note in the county's southeast, contained approximately 150 inhabitants, free and enslaved; most of its residents were farmers, laborers, domestic servants, or boatmen, with a few skilled tradesmen and professionals living in the area. The town's economic importance evaporated after the closure of its port in the 1790s. Approximately 750 people

most of the county's farms were of moderate size, between 50 and 500 acres (20 and 200 ha), growing wheat, corn, and other grains. Neither tobacco nor cotton were important crops. In the area of today's park, farms bordered two roads that converged in Dumfries: a good road to the north (approximating modern route 234) and Forest Road to the south (following today's route 619). A few mills processed grain for use or barter, and several stores sold goods which locals could not produce themselves.

Fort Sumter and Beyond: Local Responses to Secession and War

Even with the federal capital nearby, Prince William County was not abuzz with unionist sentiment. Virginia was a slave state, and most local voters supported the state's secession from the Union after the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter. County voters elected lawyer Eppa Hunton, an "Immediate Secessionist," and W.G. Brawner, a former county sheriff, to a Richmond convention where, on 17 April 1861, delegates rescinded a February vote to keep Virginia in the Union. The commonwealth soon joined the nascent Confederacy. Prince William's voters - all white men - ratified this action later that May, supporting secession by an 841-38 margin.

County residents had little time to savor the Confederacy. By the end of 1862, major battles in Manassas and Fredericksburg left much of the county in ruin. Unionist officials influenced the area through the restored state government of Francis Pierpont in Wheeling and, after 1863, Alexandria, to a greater extent than did Confederates in Richmond. Still, U.S. control did not equal loyalty to the Union among secessionists, as Confederate partisans, including Colonel John Mosby, operated nearby. On the homefront, local white women often claimed widowhood while their husbands served in the Confederate army. They hoped U.S. soldiers

would look more favorably upon 'widows' than upon the wives of rebel troops.

Many white men from the Quantico Valley joined local units of the Confederacy's Army of Northern Virginia. Most enlisted in Company B of the 49th Virginia Infantry (the Quantico Guards), or the Prince William Partisan Rangers, which, late in the war, became Company H of the 15th Virginia Cavalry Battalion. Among the local residents who fought for the Confederacy were Henry Carter, a lieutenant in the Quantico Guards; James Ratcliffe, a private in the same unit; and Edwin Nelson of the Prince William Partisan Rangers.

No sources of the reactions of the county's enslaved residents to the events of the war exist. Some former slaves from Virginia escaped to the north and, after 1863, joined units of the United States Colored Troops. Others made themselves "contraband," escaping enslavement and reaching the lines of the U.S. military, where they found protection and sometimes work in building earthworks and other heavy or dirty labor. Many slaves were unable to reach U.S. lines as their owners sent them to areas of the deep south where escape or confiscation seemed less likely, places that seemed to be outside the paths of advancing U.S. forces.

The War Comes to Dumfries

The battles in Manassas and Fredericksburg echoed in the Quantico Valley, and local residents often saw soldiers of both sides. Soon after the war began in 1861, the Confederate army built several artillery batteries along the Potomac in Prince William County. They intended to use these forts to block -ade access to Washington by the Potomac and enable Confederate sympathizers in Maryland to smuggle goods to Virginia via Budd's Ferry in Charles County. Confederate troops occupied the batteries, which stretched from the area of today's Leesylvania State Park to the town of Quantico, until March of 1862, when General Joseph E. Johnston determined that his army could not successfully defend them and withdrew south to the Rappahannock.

By December of 1862, General Ambrose Burnside and the U.S. Army of the Potomac were encamped in Falmouth, across the Rappahannock from Fredericksburg. Burnside drew supplies for his army from a depot in Dumfries. Several Confederate units raided Dumfries that winter, to harass U.S. forces and to try to obtain supplies. Among the most famous of the raids was that of J.E.B. Stuart, cavalry commander of the Confederacy's Army of Northern Virginia. He and his soldiers raided the depot on 27 December, but found its supplies low and its garrison large and broke off their attack, riding instead against U.S. depots in Fairfax County. There they gained much-needed supplies for the Confederate army.

Rebuilding Virginia

During the war, the United States and Confederate armies fought twenty-six major battles and over four hundred lesser engagements in Virginia. These clashes devastated the Shenandoah Valley, Richmond, Hampton Roads, and the state's northern counties. By 1865, Virginia's economy was in ruin. The factories of Richmond were burned shells, and military activities, conscription, and destroyed livestock, equipment, and seeds kept farmers across the state from planting full crops. The system of enslaved labor was nearly dead. Lawlessness pervaded the countryside. Worthless Confederate dollars and bonds brought destitution to many residents as their savings, already eroded by inflation, evaporated. The U.S. army distributed food to needy Virginians, supplying nearly 25,000 during the autumn of 1865.

Pierpont's Alexandria-based state government moved to Richmond in May of 1865, soon after the city's occupation. The quick surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia enabled U.S. soldiers to assume

state's former Confederates. He allowed returning Confederate soldiers to participate in local government after taking a loyalty oath. Unionist Virginians protested that Pierpont's actions ignored their years of loyalty to the United States while living under Confederate authority. Similarly, poor whites found the return to power of prewar elites disruptive as elites attempted to reaffirm old status-based relationships. Virginia's millions of newly-emancipated African-Americans found that slavery had ended, but that most whites had little interest in allowing former slaves to live in anything but subservient roles. Officials of the federal Freedmen's Bureau worked to help former slaves adapt to life in free society.

Johnson's conciliatory approach brought condemnation from the U.S. Congress, where many Republicans supported a stricter, slower readmission process. Congress placed Virginia under military government in 1867; the state was not readmitted to the U.S. until it enacted a constitution

police powers and suppress local banditry, allowing the resumption of local socioeconomic trade. As did U.S. President Andrew Johnson, elevated to the office after Abraham Lincoln's assassination, Pierpont adopted a conciliationist approach to the

that ended slavery and extended equal legal protections to former slaves. Virginia passed the "Underwood Constitution" and ratified the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the U.S. Constitution in 1896; it gained readmittance in 1870.

The Postwar Quantico Valley

Many United States and Confederate soldiers passed through the Quantico Valley. Some were garrisoned at Dumfries or the Potomac forts, while others marched through the area towards other battlefields. These soldiers left few visible traces of their activities in today's park. Archaeological surveys from 1999 to 2003 found no wartime earthworks or campsites, and few artifacts left by U.S. or Confederate soldiers.

Semi-subsistence farming remained the most important economic activity in the area of today's park into the 1930s, when the Civilian Conservation Corps built the five cabin camps. Local farmers reclaimed fields that lay fallow during the war, fields that were overgrown with various woody plants. The opening of the Cabin Branch Pyrite Mine in

1889 provided local residents - especially those living in Batestown and Hickory Ridge - with enhanced economic opportunities, as did the establishment of the Quantico Marine Corps base in 1917. The Batestown community on Mine Road developed after the war as a settlement of former slaves and free African-Americans related to Betsy Bates. Several former Confederate soldiers are buried in cemeteries within Prince William Forest Park, including Shirley Jones in the Oak Ridge cemetery. A large stone marks the first grave of Henry Carter; his family moved his remains after their lands became part of Chopawamsic Recreational Demonstration Area.

Resources on Virginia and the Civil War

Among the many books and articles that examine the effects of the Civil War on northern Virginia are these writings:

Ash, Stephen. "White Virginians Under Federal Occupation, 1861-1865," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 98:2 (April 1990): 169-192.

_____. "Poor Whites in the Occupied South, 1861-1865," *Journal of Southern History* 57:1 (February 1991): 39-62.

_____. *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

Blair, William. *Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

Longacre, Edward G. "Stuart's Dumfries Raid," *Civil War Times Illustrated* 15:4 (1976), 18-26.

Wills, Mary Alice. *The Confederate Blockade of Washington, D.C.* Parsons, W.Va.: McClain Printing, 1975.