

Richmond

NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK • VIRGINIA

The struggle for Richmond preoccupied Northern and Southerner alike for 4 years. Situated at the head of navigation on the James River and only 110 miles from the Federal capital of Washington, Richmond was a symbol and a prime psychological objective. If the South lost its capital, Southerners might lose their will to fight—so reasoned leaders on both sides in the early years of the war. But there were more compelling reasons, for besides being the political center of the Confederacy, it was a medical and manufacturing center, and the primary supply depot for troops operating on the Confederacy's northeastern frontier.

Of the seven major drives launched against Richmond, two brought Union forces almost within sight of the city—McClellan's Peninsular Campaign of 1862, culminating in the Seven Days' Battles, and Grant's crushing campaign of 1864.



George B. McClellan

By early 1862 Gen. George B. McClellan had forged around the "cowering regiments" that survived the first Battle of Manassas a ponderous but disciplined 100,000-man fighting machine. With it he moved by water to invest east-central Virginia and capture Richmond. The operation was to have been assisted by an overland assault by troops under Gen. Irvin McDowell, but by May 24, when McClellan was deployed within 6 miles of the prize, President Lincoln had become alarmed for Washington's safety and suspended McDowell's movement. While McClellan fretted, Confederate Gen. Joseph Johnston struck an inept blow at the Union forces near Fair Oaks on May 31. Johnston was seriously wounded in the battle and Gen. Robert E. Lee succeeded to command—one of the most significant events of the war.

McClellan, who had maintained his dangerous position astride the Chickahominy expecting McDowell's corps to join him, hesitated too long. On June 26 the reinforced Confederates attacked and rolled up the Union right wing at Mechanicsville, then suffered heavy losses in futile attacks against the strong Union position on Beaver Dam Creek. Thus began the Seven Days' Battles, a series of side-stepping withdrawals and bitter holding actions that climaxed the Peninsular Campaign and enabled the Union Army to avoid disaster by circling east of Richmond to the security of Federal gunboats on the James River.



Robert E. Lee

For 2 years, while the armies fought indecisively in northern Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, Richmond entrenched and applauded Lee's unbroken successes in keeping northern armies impotent. In March 1864 Gen. Ulysses S. Grant assumed command of all Union armies in the field. Attaching himself to the Army of the Potomac, Grant embarked on an unyielding campaign against Richmond and the Army of Northern Virginia. Said Lee: "We must stop this army of Grant's before he gets to the James River. If he gets there it will become a siege, and then it will be a mere question of time."

In a series of flanking movements designed to cut Lee off from the Confederate capital, the Union Army slipped past the Southerners at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House, although it suffered heavy casualties. At Cold Harbor, Grant's massive frontal assaults against the strongly entrenched Confederate line failed dismally with appalling losses. For 10 days the badly bruised Federals and starving Confederates broiled in the trenches; then Grant withdrew, crossed the James, and drove toward the important rail center of Petersburg.

Ulysses S. Grant



Evacuation of Richmond. From a contemporary engraving

Richmond withstood all attacks until Grant's successful siege of Petersburg forced Lee to retreat westward from that city on April 2, 1865. Richmond was abandoned the following day. Flushed from the cover of his fortifications, Lee fell prey to superior Union forces. His surrender at Appomattox Court House and the collapse of the Confederacy followed swiftly.

Richmond National Battlefield Park commemorates the Seven Days' Battles, Cold Harbor, and five lesser operations.

VISITING THE BATTLEFIELDS

We suggest that you begin your tour at the Chimborazo Visitor Center, 3215 East Broad Street, where exhibits and an audiovisual program introduce you to the history of the 1861-65 defense of Richmond. Uniformed Park Service interpreters will answer your questions and provide you with historical information, as well as the latest road conditions. A variety of informational sales publications will help you understand the battlefields. Schedules of Living History programs and other special events during the year are available at the visitor center. Smaller visitor centers with exhibits are at Cold Harbor and Fort Harrison.

Each area of the park is identified by the distinctive blue and gray signs with the bright red cannon, and each is interpreted by Park Service historical markers. Chickahominy Bluff, Malvern Hill, Fort Harrison, and Drewry's Bluff have special interpretive facilities. Whenever possible, spend some time walking in each area; it is the best way to gain a real understanding of its significance.

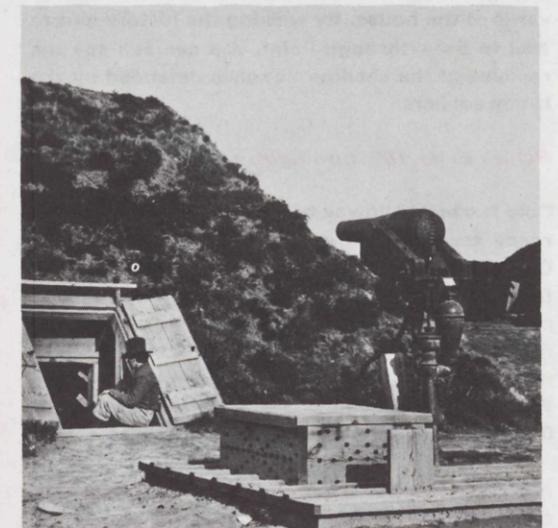
The Watt House, Ft. Harrison, Ft. Brady, and Drewry's Bluff have special hiking trails. Picnic facilities are available at Ft. Harrison.

FOR YOUR SAFETY

While every effort is made to provide for your safety, you must remain alert and cautious. The park roads are narrow, winding, and intended for leisurely enjoyment. Be alert for pedestrians.

CARING FOR THE PARK

Please help us preserve this park for the enjoyment of this and future generations. Stay on the trails; climbing on the fragile earthworks destroys them. All plants, animals, structures, relics, and artifacts within the park are protected; metal detecting and relic hunting are prohibited.



Interior of Fort Darling

ADMINISTRATION

Richmond National Battlefield Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is 3215 East Broad St., Richmond, VA 23223, is in immediate charge.

Note that the park is open only during daylight hours and that parking is restricted to designated areas.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

A TOUR OF THE RICHMOND BATTLEFIELDS

A complete tour of the battlefields, which includes those of 1862 and 1864, requires a 97-mile drive as outlined on the map. For convenience, follow the route as laid out.

As you leave the Chimborazo Visitor Center, turn left on Broad Street. At the fourth stoplight (18th and Broad) turn right and follow U.S. 360 East 5 miles to

Chickahominy Bluff. A part of the outer Confederate line defending Richmond, this bluff offers a fine view of the Mechanicsville and Chickahominy area. Within sight of the earthworks here, Gen. Robert E. Lee watched the beginning of the Seven Days' Battles.

Continue 2.5 miles on U.S. 360 East toward Mechanicsville, turn right on Va. 156, "The Battlefield Route," and drive 0.8 mile to

Beaver Dam Creek. Part of the 3-mile Union front which the Confederates unsuccessfully attacked on June 26, 1862, lies in the valley of Beaver Dam Creek. Few Confederates crossed the stream as massed Union artillery and infantry fire stopped Lee's attack all along the line. The earthwork beyond the creek was a millrace which, said one Confederate officer, was "waist deep in water."

Proceed 4.8 miles along Va. 156 where you will find a sign directing you to the Watt House, 0.7 mile off the highway on Va. 718.

Gaines' Mill (Watt House). Most of the fighting during the battle of Gaines' Mill on June 27, 1862, took place about 1 mile from the mill. Near the Watt House, a restored landmark of the battle, Gen. Fitz-John Porter established his headquarters during a crucial point in the fighting. Texas and Georgia troops broke the line within a few hundred yards of the house. By walking the history-nature trail to Breakthrough Point, you can still see the remains of the shallow trenches defended by the Union soldiers.

Return to Va. 156, turn right, and drive 0.3 mile to

Cold Harbor. Midway between two shabby cross-roads taverns—Old and New Cold Harbors—the Confederates dug in on June 1-2, 1864, to await Grant's attack. It came on June 3, a frontal assault on a narrow section of the line, and it cost the Federals 7,000 casualties in 30 minutes. The well-preserved trenches are fine examples of Civil War field fortifications. The Garthright House is 0.2 mile from the Cold Harbor exit along Va. 156.

From Cold Harbor, continue 20.6 miles on Va. 156 to Malvern Hill. Along the way you will pass several battlefields of the 1862 Peninsular Campaign that are not part of Richmond National Battlefield Park—Fair Oaks, Seven Pines, Savage Station, White Oak Swamp, and Glendale. State historical markers tell of the fighting.

Malvern Hill. This was the last of the Seven Days' Battles of 1862, after which McClellan withdrew to his base at Harrison's Landing. The Federals,



on the defensive, dug no trenches. Instead, they stood at bay in parade-ground, line-of-battle formation across the gently sloping field, and their massed artillery and infantry fire shattered the ranks of the attacking Confederates. The steep slopes of Malvern Hill on the Union left and the swampy stream bottoms on the right forced the Confederates to advance across open ground.

From Malvern Hill, follow Va. 156 for 1.3 miles and turn right on Va. 5. Drive for 7.1 miles, where a sign directs you to the left along a park road, past Forts Gilmer, Gregg, and Johnson to

Fort Harrison. After Cold Harbor, Grant crossed the James and directed his main effort against Petersburg. In a surprise attack, designed to prevent Lee from shifting troops to another theater of operations, Union soldiers captured the fort on September 29, 1864. The fort was occupied and enlarged by the Federals, thus forcing a realignment of Richmond's southern defenses.

From Fort Harrison, follow the park road south to Fort Hoke. Just beyond the fort turn left, and follow Hoke-Brady Road to

Fort Brady. This was one of the few river forts not designed to stop enemy ships. A Federal stronghold on the James River, it was intended to neutralize Fort Darling across the river on Drewry's Bluff and to anchor the Union line from Fort Harrison. Later, more guns were added to fire on Confederate gunboats.

From Fort Brady, return to Kingsland Road, turn right and proceed to Va. 5 East. Follow this historic Indian and colonial road toward the James River plantations. Turn right again on Va. 156 South and cross the Benjamin Harrison Bridge. Turn right on Va. 10 West and proceed 9.7 miles to Pinebark Road (Va. 898), turn left and drive 0.2 mile to Ramblewood Road (Va. 617), turn left and proceed to the dirt road just beyond the railroad tracks to

Parker's Battery. This battery held a small section of the Howlett Line. It was a quiet post, but one that helped immobilize Gen. Benjamin F. Butler's Army of the James in May 1864.

From Parker's Battery return to Pinebark Road, turn left, go .2 mile to Old Stage Road, turn right, follow to Va. 10 West, turn left, follow to U.S. 1 North; turn right, go 4 miles and turn right on Bellwood Road (Va. 656). Just beyond the I-95 overpass, turn left on Fort Darling Road and follow signs to

Drewry's Bluff (Fort Darling). The Federals called this Confederate stronghold Fort Darling; Southerners called it Drewry's Bluff. On May 15, 1862, four Federal gunboats, including the famous ironclad *Monitor*, and one revenue steamer attacked the fort but were driven off. Exhibits and markers give details of the successful Confederate defense.

This concludes the battlefield tour. You may retrace the route to U.S. 1 and enter I-95 at either Willis Road (southbound) or Falling Creek (northbound).