

pletely in two. After midnight, the Southerners withdrew to their newly-built trenches leaving the field to the exhausted Federals.

On May 18 a frontal attack against Lee's final line failed miserably and three days later Grant abandoned the earthworks at Spotsylvania in favor of another movement toward Richmond. Accurate casualty figures are difficult to ascertain, but at least 25,000 soldiers fell victim to enemy fire at Spotsylvania Court House. The War would continue for eleven more months but in truth the sanguine struggle on this battlefield sapped the offensive power of Lee's proud army and spelled the beginning of the end for the Confederacy.

### ABOUT THE TRAIL

The Spotsylvania Battlefield History Trail is a seven mile loop hiking path connecting many of the major sites associated with the fighting at Spotsylvania May 8-21, 1864. Bicycles and motorized vehicles are prohibited from using the trail, however horseback riding is permitted. Hikers are urged to use caution when crossing park roads and state route 613, and to be alert for natural hazards such as poisonous snakes, stinging insects and poison ivy. Drinking water and rest rooms are available only at the Exhibit Shelter. Water sources on the battlefield are polluted and unsafe for drinking. A picnic area is located near the Exhibit Shelter and in order to preserve an historic environment, hikers are asked to refrain from picnicking within sight of any park road or exhibit. Walking on fragile earthworks accelerates the deterioration of these historic remains so please stay on the trail. This trail is a joint project of the National Park Service and the Youth Conservation Corps.

### ABOUT THE PARK

Spotsylvania Court House Battlefield is a unit of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. The park preserves four Civil War battlefields, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness, and Spotsylvania, as well as three historic buildings associated with the War, Chatham, Old Salem Church, and Stonewall Jackson Shrine. Park rangers are on duty daily throughout the year at the Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville Visitor Centers and at Chatham to answer questions and provide information. Correspondence pertaining to the park may be directed to the Superintendent at Box 679, Fredericksburg, Virginia 22404.

### THE BATTLE OF SPOTSYLVANIA COURT HOUSE

In the spring of 1864, the two finest armies ever to fight in North America clashed in these forests and fields around the sleepy hamlet of Spotsylvania Court House, Virginia. The Union army, commanded by Ulysses S. Grant, intended to realize its war-long goal of capturing the Southern capital at Richmond, and in the process overwhelm their resilient antagonist, the Army of Northern Virginia. General Robert E. Lee hoped to thwart this latest Federal offensive, protect central Virginia and the city of Richmond from invasion and convince the Northern populace that Grant could no more subdue Confederate arms in the East than any of his many predecessors.

On May 5 and 6, Grant and Lee met in the tangled thickets of the Wilderness ten miles northwest of Spotsylvania. The Army of the Potomac suffered tremendous casualties without gaining a strategic victory, but instead of recrossing the Rappahannock River to lick his wounds, Grant pushed southward. His immediate objective was the vital crossroads at Spotsylvania Court House because whichever army controlled this intersection also controlled the shortest route to Richmond. Confederate infantry won a dramatic race to the village on May 7 and 8 and then began a tenacious defense which would last almost two weeks.

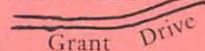
Although the operations around Spotsylvania Court House are referred to as one battle, in reality this campaign was a series of separate engagements connected by constant firing from entrenched positions. After being repulsed in his initial attack at Laurel Hill on May 8, Grant continually shifted his lines to the southeast probing for a weakness in Lee's defenses. On May 10, Colonel Emory Upton and twelve hand-picked regiments broke through the west face of a U-shaped salient held by Doles' Georgia brigade and retreated only when expected support did not materialize. The success of this venture earned Upton a General's star and persuaded Grant to assault the vulnerable salient on a grand scale two days later. The intense combat on May 12 at the Bloody Angle was unparalleled in the Civil War. For twenty hours brave South Carolinians and Mississippians withstood determined attempts by members of the II and VI Corps to capture their position. Riding forward from his headquarters to the McCoull House, General Lee personally tried to lead a counter-attack while his engineers prepared a new line at the base of the salient behind the Harrison House. Lee regained his composure and his men bought time with hand-to-hand fighting which grew so fierce that musket fire from close range severed a mature oak tree com-

# SPOTSYLVANIA BATTLEFIELD

## HISTORY TRAIL

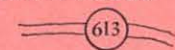
### Key

PARK ROADS



Grant Drive

STATE ROADS



HISTORY TRAIL



TRENCHES

BRIDGES

Scale

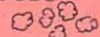
0 100 200 300 400

Yards

POINTS OF INTEREST

McCull House Ruins

WOODS



THE TRAIL IS APPROXIMATELY  
7 MILES LONG.

STREAMS

This trail is a part of the National  
Recreation Trail system.



Exhibit  
Shelter  
TRAIL BEGINS  
& ENDS HERE

Sedgwick  
Monument

613

Hancock Trail

Maryland  
Monument

685

648

Be CAREFUL crossing  
all roads.

Please assist us in preserving  
the trenches by crossing them  
only at the bridges.

Look for:  
--blue blazes in woods  
--mowed paths in fields.

WATCH for traffic  
as you hike.

FIRST PASS,  
TURN LEFT;  
SECOND PASS,  
GO STRAIGHT.

