



# The Siege of Petersburg

A *Views of the National Parks* virtual experience



Petersburg National Battlefield preserves the cultural and natural resources that offer a window to past events in the American Civil War. With five railroad lines and key roads, Petersburg was an important supply center to the Confederate capital in Richmond. This city became the setting for the longest siege of the Civil War when Union General Ulysses S. Grant decided to cut off Confederate General Robert E. Lee's supply lines into Petersburg and Richmond.

The Siege of Petersburg explores both stories of the past and preservation issues of the present. Through the eyes of a war general, a plantation owner, a soldier, a surgeon, an engineer, or a civilian you can learn about military operations and the impacts on those involved. Through *Views*, you can experience the current challenges of protecting the natural resources associated with this historic landscape. A closer look at each unit within the park will provide the viewer an understanding of the war and its causes, impacts, and legacies to generations of Americans.

## Features

This experience was designed to provide the user with a variety of teaching tools to learn the why and how of protecting the park's natural and cultural resources.

### • Introduction

Watch a video of historic images of the Civil War and modern day images of the same landscape. The video provides an orientation to the battlefield units.

### • Grant's Headquarters at City Point

Once the home of a wealthy plantation owner, this site was the headquarters of General Grant and became one of the busiest seaports in the world during the siege. Explore Grant's cabin, read a diary of a surgeon and a plantation owner, and learn how to supply an army.

### • Eastern Front

During the 9-1/2 month siege, soldiers from both armies were entrenched in the fields around Petersburg. Experience life under fire by taking orders as a soldier, learn how to fire a cannon and dig a fortification, and examine the siege of Petersburg through the eyes of United States Colored Troops, a doctor, a child, and a civilian woman.

Petersburg was the sight of a 9-1/2 month siege during the Civil War that resulted in General Grant capturing Petersburg and Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy. (Library of Congress and NPS Photos)

*The siege goes bravely on. The two armies keep digging away under each other's guns. The hardships to be endured are very great, but all have now schooled themselves down so that they are met as a matter of course.*

— Color Sergeant D.G. Crotty  
Third Michigan Volunteer  
Infantry, Army of the Potomac

As part of the Petersburg virtual experience, you can assume the role of an infantry soldier on the front lines.

## The Siege of Petersburg

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### Profiles of Duty

Hearing the call to duty, citizens of both the North and South volunteered their services in support of their respective causes. Some fought as soldiers, while others worked on the home front, behind the lines, where they provided necessary medical care and support. During the nine-and-a-half month siege, Petersburg became a hub of activity, where tobacco warehouses became hospitals and farmland was transformed into battlegrounds marked by miles of trenches. Here, the duties of an infantry soldier, an artillery soldier, an engineer and surgeon were critical to the success and survival of both armies.

Explore these profiles of duty along the Eastern Front using the links below.



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- **Western Front**

Read a diary of a military railroad engineer, study troop movements using interactive maps that highlight the military campaign from the Richmond and Petersburg fronts, and explore the challenge of preserving battlefields in developing rural areas.

- **Five Forks Battlefield**

Compare the letters and diaries of a Union and a Confederate soldier, equip a cavalry soldier, and learn about the significance of cavalry regiments during the siege and specifically the Battle of Five Forks.

- **Poplar Grove National Cemetery**

This site became the final resting place for 6,178 Union soldiers who fought in the trenches and fields surrounding Petersburg. Learn about soldiers buried there and those who worked to establish this National Cemetery, take a virtual tour of the site, and examine the challenges of preserving burial stones.

### Partners

The Natural Resource Program Center (NRPC) teamed up with interpretive rangers at Petersburg National Battlefield and members of James Madison University's College of Integrated Science and Technology to create this virtual experience.

### Contact us

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*We do not pretend to say how long we will have a rest, nor do we care much, for we are so used to hardships that almost everything is done without a murmur.*

— Color Sergeant D.G. Crotty  
Third Michigan Volunteer  
Infantry, Army of the Potomac

Visit Petersburg National Battlefield online:  
[www.nps.gov/pete](http://www.nps.gov/pete)

### Teacher Resources

The Teacher Guide provides teachers (both local and distant) with curriculum-based activities and lesson plans that can be used in the classroom and in the field. These teaching tools include both history and science-based lessons on Civil War-related themes and battlefield preservation that can be printed or viewed on the computer. National teaching standards have information about which science and social studies standards can be met using this virtual experience.