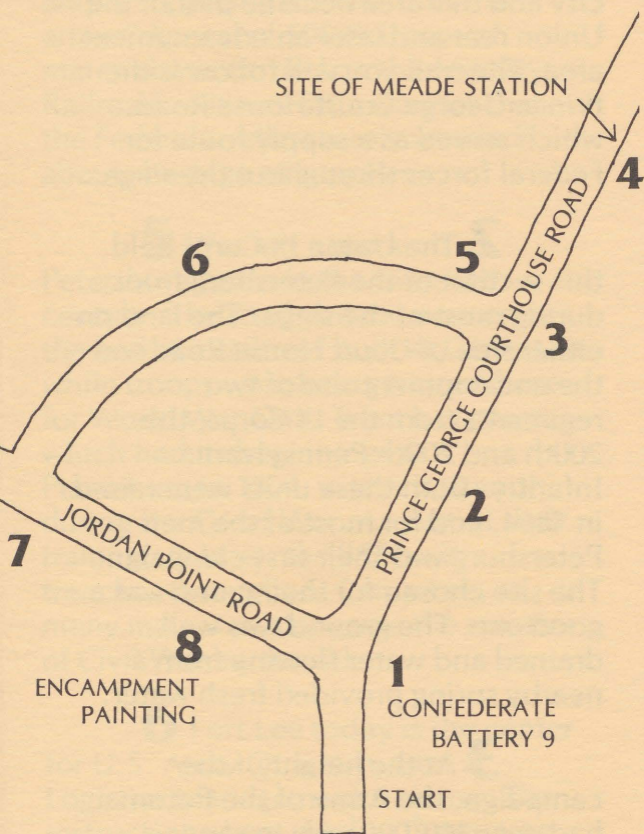

Meade Station

TRAIL

Petersburg National Battlefield



The Union Army's siege of Petersburg in 1864-1865 was one of the largest military operations of the 19th century. Supplying the tens-of-thousands of soldiers who served at Petersburg was of the greatest concern to the Federal High Command, and involved at least as much planning and coordination as the defeat of Lee's Army itself. The key element for the supplying of the troops was the U.S. Military Railroad. Meade Station trail passes through one of the many Union encampment areas around Petersburg and leads to a depot on the Military Railroad. The trail is a 3/4 mile loop which can be walked in about 25 minutes.

1 Confederate Battery 9 was originally part of the Confederate "Dimmock" Line, the earthen defenses built in 1862 to protect Petersburg from attack. This portion of the line was captured by Union forces in the first few days fighting in mid-June of 1864. After the attack, the Rebels reestablished their defenses about a mile closer to the city and this area became part of the Union rear and later an encampment area. The trail you will follow is the Prince George Court House Road which served as a supply route for Federal forces throughout the siege.

2 The Union IX Corps held this section of the Petersburg front during most of the siege. The land on either side of Court House Road was the encampment site of two regiments from the IX Corps, the 200th and 209th Pennsylvania Infantry. Both these units were raised in 1864, and for most of the men Petersburg was their first campaign. The site chosen for their camp was a good one. The ground was well drained and water flowing from a nearby spring provided fresh water.

3 At the height of the campaign, the Army of the Potomac had over 100,000 men in service

around Petersburg. Supplying this number of troops with food, clothing, medical care and ammunition presented Grant with challenges never before faced. The heart of the Federal supply system for Petersburg was City Point (now Hopewell), a town on the James River five miles to the east. The City Point and Army Line, a military railroad built by Union engineers, carried the supplies from City Point directly to the front. Along the line depots were established for the loading and unloading of men and material. Meade Station was one such depot. Continue along the trail to its site.

4 During the siege 60,000 passengers a month were transported over the Military Railroad. According to the Chief Engineer, the railroad line "... was put in first-rate order, and the track would compare favorably with any first-class road... At all the stations on the line sidings were laid out and station-houses were built. An average of nine trains exclusive of specials, were run each way daily, amply supplying the wants of the army." A total of 500,000 tons of material was carried on the Military Railroad — it was little wonder that the Federal soldiers rarely worried about shortage of supplies.

5 War left a mark on Petersburg again in the twentieth century. The road you are now on is the bed of a railroad built at Camp Lee while troops were being trained here for World War One. Trench warfare, which had its beginnings at Petersburg in 1864, was at its zenith during the Great War. As part of their training, soldiers in 1917 built trenches throughout Camp Lee, in many instances alongside the remains of Civil War earthworks.

6 Fort Lee today is the center for U.S. Army Quartermaster & Logistics Management training. The instructions here deal with training

of those responsible for material and logistical support for U.S. forces. The post hospital, across the road to the left, was built on the site of the IX Corps hospital constructed in 1864.

7 The trail now follows Jordan Point Road, a route established in the 17th century between Petersburg and Jordan Point, a ferry crossing on the James River lying six miles to the east. Union soldiers advancing on Petersburg from the James River on June 15, 1864 used this road. Confederate Battery 9 was built to help defend this approach.

8 Once it became evident that the fight for Petersburg would be a long one, construction began on winter quarters. One soldier wrote "...the men went to work with a hearty good will, erecting huts of rough, unhewn logs, the interstices being filled with mud. Chimneys were built on the outside, of alternate layers of sticks and clay, the tops were often crowned with old barrels. The roofs were covered with old canvas of pieces of shelter tents... These huts were generally made to hold four or more and were quite comfortable; in fact they were looked upon as palatial, after the long exposure to heat and cold and storms..."

For nearly ten months the Union Army lived and fought in the fields and forests surrounding Petersburg. When they moved on in April of 1865, the huts, shelters, warehouses and earthworks they left behind were destroyed or put to other uses. The Military Railroad deteriorated and was eventually removed. Petersburg and the surrounding countryside were allowed to return to more peaceful pursuits. We hope you have enjoyed the trail.