

Richmond

National Battlefield Park
Virginia

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



McClellan's 1862 Peninsular Campaign brought the Union army within sight of Richmond for the first time in the Civil War. The city might have fallen but McClellan dallied too long and, in a series of encounters known as the 'Seven Days' Battles,

Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee drove the Federals back to their base on the James River. The contest ended at Malvern Hill, where a staunch Union resistance (left) halted Confederate pursuit.



At Gaines' Mill, the third of the Seven Days' Battles, Union troops under Fitz-John Porter (shown left with his staff) held fast until finally overwhelmed by a massive Confederate assault.



The Battle of Cold Harbor, (left), fought during Grant's 1864 Overland Campaign, lasted less than 30 minutes but cost the Federals some 7,000 casualties. The battle proved to be Lee's last major victory in the field.

Embattled Capital 1861-65

April 3, 1865. "As the sun rose on Richmond, such a spectacle was presented as can never be forgotten by those who witnessed it. . . . All the horrors of the final conflagration, when the earth shall be wrapped in flames and melt with fervent heat, were, it seemed to us, prefigured in our capital. . . . The roaring, crackling and hissing of the flames, the bursting of shells at the Confederate Arsenal, the sounds of the instruments of martial music, the neighing of the horses, the shoutings of the multitudes . . . gave an idea of all the horrors of Pandemonium. Above all this scene of terror, hung a black shroud of smoke through which the sun shone with a lurid angry glare like an immense ball of blood that emitted sullen rays of light, as if loath to shine over a scene so appalling. . . . [Then] a cry was raised: 'The Yankees! The Yankees are coming!'"

Thus did Sallie Putnam, who had lived in Richmond throughout the war, recall the final disastrous hours of the city whose existence preoccupied northerner and southerner alike through 4 bitter, bloody years and whose final subjugation signalled the beginning of the end for the Confederate States of America.

Situated at the head of navigation on the James River and only 176 kilometers (110 miles) from the Federal capital of Washington, Richmond had been a symbol and a prime psychological objective since the beginning of the Civil War in 1861. If the city were to be captured, southerners might lose their will to resist—so reasoned leaders on both sides. But there were even more compelling reasons why Richmond became a military target, for besides being the political center of the Southern 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 overland campaign of 1864 which ultimately brought the Confederacy tumbling down.

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 called the Army of the Potomac. 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 and coordinated with a water-borne move up the James River. A Union naval attack was halted on May 15 at Drewry's Bluff and by May 24, when McClellan was deployed within 10 kilometers (6 miles) of the Confederate capital, President Lincoln had become alarmed for Washington's safety and suspended McDowell's movement.

Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, the Confederate commander, now believing that McClellan planned to stay north of the James River, decided to attack. On May 31 Johnston's troops fell on the Federals near Fair Oaks. Although the resulting battle proved indecisive, it did produce significant results for both armies. The already deliberate McClellan was made even more cautious than usual. More important, because of a serious wound sustained by General Johnston during the battle, President Jefferson Davis placed Gen. Robert E. Lee in command of the defending forces.

McClellan, who had maintained a dangerous position astride the Chickahominy River expecting McDowell's corps to join him, hesitated too long.

On June 26 Lee's Army of Northern Virginia attacked and rolled up the Union right flank at Mechanicsville, then suffered heavy losses in futile attacks against the strong Union positions on Beaver Dam Creek. Thus began the Seven Days' Battles, a series of side-stepping withdrawals and holding actions that climaxed the Peninsular Campaign at Malvern Hill and enabled the Union army to avoid disaster by circling east of Richmond to the security of Federal gunboats on the James River at Harrison's Landing. When the Seven Days ended, some 35,000 soldiers, north and south, were casualties, and many on both sides probably shared the view of a young Georgian who wrote home: "I have seen, heard and felt many things in the last week that I never want to see, hear nor feel again . . ."

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, then under the command of Gen. George Gordon Meade, 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 matter 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 on June 3, 1864, Grant's massive frontal assaults against the strongly entrenched Confederate lines failed dismally, with appalling casualties. For 10 days the badly bruised Federals

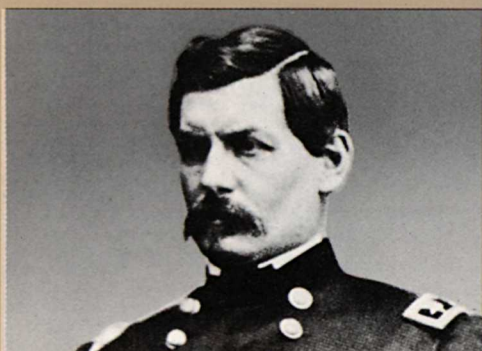
and hungry Confederates broiled in the trenches under 100-degree heat; then Grant silently withdrew, crossed the James River, and drove toward the important rail center of Petersburg, south of Richmond.

For the next 10 months Richmond withstood all attacks, including an assault on major Confederate outer defenses north and south of Fort Harrison in September 1864. Life in the forts and trenches around the city became routine and humdrum. Just finding enough to eat and keeping warm became constant pastimes.

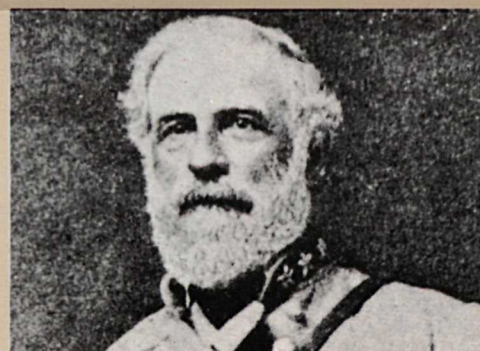
Grant's successful siege of Petersburg over the winter of 1864-65 forced Lee to retreat westward from that city on April 2, 1865. The following day, soon after dawn, Richmond's mayor, Joseph C. Mayo, delivered the following message to the commander of the Union forces waiting to enter the Confederate capital: "The Army of the Confederate Government having abandoned the City of Richmond, I respectfully request that you will take possession of it with organized force, to preserve order and protect women and children and property."

Upon evacuation of the city, the Confederate government authorized the burning of warehouses and supplies, which resulted in considerable damage to factories and houses in the business district. Before the charred ruins of Richmond had cooled, Lee, with the remnant of his army, surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865. The collapse of the Confederacy followed swiftly.

The Generals



George B. McClellan was a superb military organizer, and his creation, the Army of the Potomac, was a proud and finely disciplined body of soldiers. McClellan's dilatory tactics in the 1862 campaign, however, helped to save Richmond from capture.



Robert E. Lee was offered command of United States troops in 1861 but he chose to join the Confederacy instead. Under his leadership, the Army of Northern Virginia fought valiantly to defend Richmond against repeated Federal onslaughts.



Ulysses S. Grant, as general in chief of all Federal armies, vowed that wherever Lee went he would follow. His unrelenting 1864-65 campaign proved costly to the North but finally brought about the defeat of Lee and the surrender of Richmond.

The Fortifications of Richmond



The Army of Northern Virginia was only one factor in the successful defense of the Confederate capital from 1861-65. Another was the fortifications built by the South which nearly encircled the city. The outer ring of defenses, stretching for more



than 104 kilometers (65 miles), was approximately 16 kilometers (10 miles) from the capital. Within that ring was an intermediate line about 6 kilometers (4 miles) from the city. And just outside the city limits stood a series of star forts as inner defenses.

These forts and breastworks, along with others such as the trenches built at Cold Harbor, served to help repel the numerous attempts by Union armies to capture the coveted capital of the Confederacy.

Richmond



The remains of Fort Harrison (left), one of the principal works in the Richmond defenses, 1862-64, are still well-preserved within Richmond National Battlefield Park.



Two park structures with strong Civil War associations are (far left) the Garthright House, used as a field hospital, and the Watt House, Gen. Fitz-John Porter's headquarters.

Touring Richmond's Battlefields

Richmond National Battlefield Park consists of the nine units listed below plus the Chimborazo Visitor Center. A complete tour of the park involves a 160-kilometer (100-mile) drive as outlined on the map. For your convenience, we have grouped and

1862

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

Beaver Dam Creek. Part of the 5-kilometer (3-mile) Union front which the Confederates unsuccessfully attacked on June 26 lies here in the valley of Beaver Dam Creek at Ellerson's Mill. Few Confederates crossed the stream as Union artillery and infantry fire stopped Lee's attack all along the line. The earthwork beyond the creek contained a mill-race which, said one Confederate officer, was "waist deep in water." Raw courage and the crude state of the tactical arts were demonstrated here by both sides.

Watt House (Gaines' Mill Battlefield). Most of the fighting during the Battle of Gaines' Mill on June 27 took place about 1.6 kilometers (1 mile) from the actual mill. Near the Watt House, a restored landmark of the battle, Union 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 meters of the house. By walking the short history/nature trail to Break-through Point, you can still see remains of the shallow trenches defended by Union soldiers. The house itself is an exterior exhibit only and is not open to the public. Built about 1835, it is a typical middle-class farmhouse of the period.

Malvern Hill. Fought July 1, this was the last of the Seven Days' Battles, after which McClellan

color-coded the park units according to the campaign in which each figured most prominently. Park areas associated with McClellan's 1862 campaign are indicated in red, those associated with Grant's 1864 campaign in blue.

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 fields, their massed artillery and infantry fire shattering the ranks of the attacking Confederates. The steep slopes of Malvern Hill on the Union left and the swampy bottoms on the right forced the southerners to advance across open ground. According to one Confederate officer: "It was not war—it was murder."

Drewry's Bluff. Union soldiers called this Confederate guardian of the James River Fort Darling. On May 15 four Federal gunboats, including the famous ironclad *Monitor*, and one revenue steamer attacked the fort but were driven off. The unsuccessful attack prevented Richmond from being shelled early in the war, and the presence of the fort acted as a deterrent to other Union naval forays up the James. (In May-June 1864 it also assisted in repulsing Union land attacks by Gen. Benjamin F. Butler's Army of the James.) The fort and surrounding area served as the Confederate Naval Academy and Marine Corps Camp of Instruction throughout much of the war. Exhibits and markers along a self-guiding trail give details of the fort's history.

Other battlefields not part of the park but important to an understanding of McClellan's 1862 campaign are Fair Oaks (fought May 31), Seven Pines (May 31-June 1), Savage Station (June 29), White Oak Swamp (June 30), and Glendale (June 30). State historical markers and monuments explain the fighting at these places.

1864

Cold Harbor. Midway between two shabby cross-road taverns—Old and New Cold Harbor—the Confederates dug in on June 1-2 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 along the 2-kilometer (1.25-mile) tour road are fine examples of Civil War field fortifications. The actions at Cold Harbor changed the course of the war in the East from a war of maneuver to one of siege. Cold Harbor also influenced the strategy and tactics of future wars by demonstrating that well-selected, well-manned entrenchments, supported by artillery, were practically impregnable against frontal assaults.

Garthright House. This restored house served as a Union field hospital during the Battle of Cold Harbor. It afterwards became a Confederate hospital. The house is an exterior exhibit only and is not open to the public. Portions of the house date to the early 1700s.

Fort Harrison and Vicinity. After Cold Harbor, Grant crossed the James River and directed his main effort against Petersburg. In a surprise attack designed to prevent Lee from shifting troops to an

other sector of operations, Union soldiers captured Fort Harrison on September 29. (The gallantry of several regiments of black Union troops that day was recognized by the awarding of Congressional Medals of Honor to 14 black soldiers.) The fort was occupied and enlarged by the Federals, thus forcing a realignment of Richmond's southern defenses. Forts Gilmer, Gregg, and Johnson were all Confederate defense works connected by miles of breastworks. Union Fort Brady, constructed after September 29, was designed to neutralize Fort Darling across the river on Drewry's Bluff and to anchor the Federal line from Fort Harrison. Exhibits and signs along a self-guiding trail through Fort Harrison provide details of the battle and the fort. An overlook at Fort Brady affords a splendid view of the James River.

Parker's Battery. This small Confederate artillery work helped to immobilize Union Gen. Benjamin F. Butler's Army of the James during its attack on Richmond in May. Fighting which continued into June successfully "bottled up" Butler at Bermuda Hundred. The battery then became part of the Howlett Line helping to defend Richmond until the capital was abandoned in April 1865.

- 1862 Battle Site (Tour Stop)
- 1864 Battle Site (Tour Stop)
- Other battle sites not part of park
- Tour Route
- ☒ Picnic area
- ☒ Restrooms
- ☒ Interpretive trail

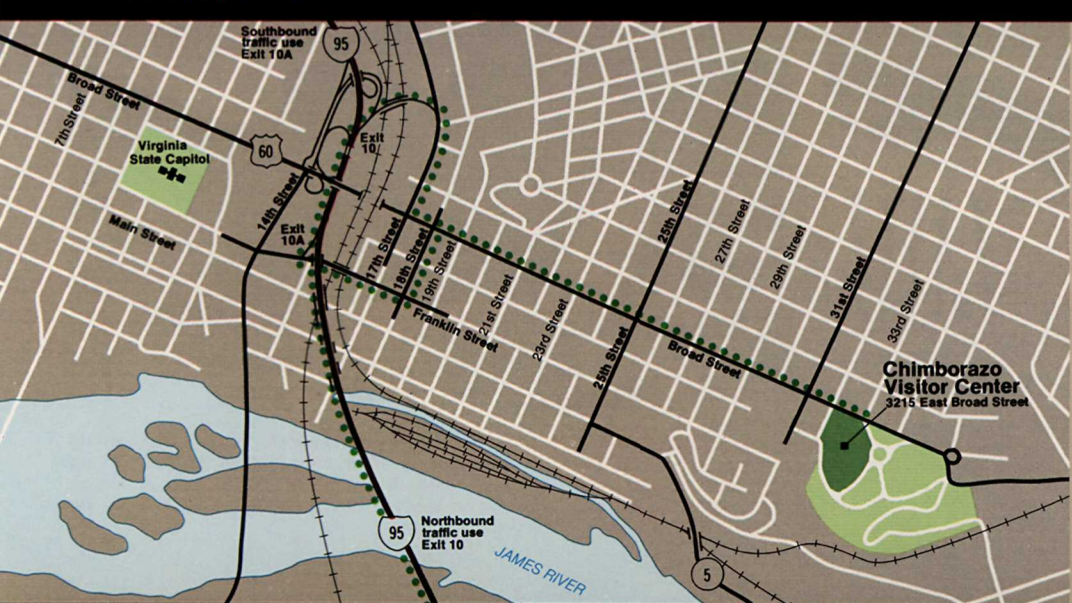
Tour stops include sites within the park only. Please respect the rights of private landholders along park roads.

The possession or use of metal detecting devices on park property is illegal.

This map is not for use in determining present legal park boundaries. Please check at a visitor center for accurate boundary information.



About Your Visit



We suggest that you begin your visit at the Chimborazo Visitor Center, 3215 East Broad St., where exhibits and an audio-visual program introduce you to the history of the 1861-65 defense of Richmond. Uniformed park interpreters will answer your questions and provide you with historical information, as well as the latest road conditions. Schedules of Living History programs and other events during the year are available at the visitor center. Smaller visitor centers with exhibits are at Cold Harbor and Fort Harrison.

Each unit of the park is

identified by distinctive signs with a bright red cannon, and each is interpreted by Park Service historical markers. Chickahominy Bluff, Malvern Hill, Fort Harrison, and Drewry's Bluff have interpretive facilities featuring an audio station, a painting, and special signs. Whenever possible, spend some time walking in each area; it is the best way to gain an understanding of its significance. The Watt House, Fort Harrison, Fort Brady, and Drewry's Bluff have short hiking or self-guided trails that take you past historical features. Picnic facilities are available only at Fort

Harrison and the Cold Harbor Visitor Center.

Richmond National Battlefield Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Send all inquiries to the Superintendent, Richmond National Battlefield Park, 3215 East Broad St., Richmond, VA 23223.

For Your Safety. While every effort is made to provide for your safety, you must remain alert and cautious. Drive carefully: park roads are narrow, winding, and intended for leisurely enjoyment. Pay particular attention to speed limits and warn-

ing signs on park roads. Park only in paved areas.

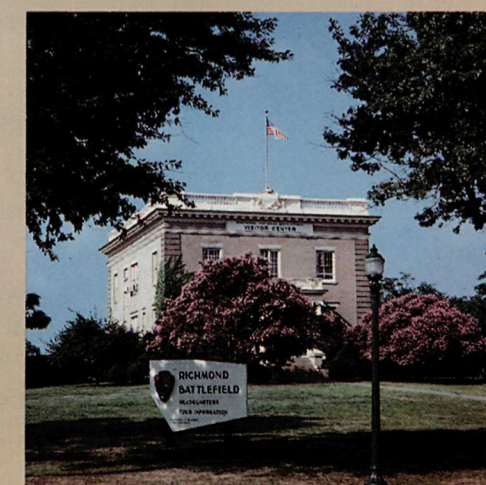
Stay on designated trails. Do not stray into the woods where you may encounter poison ivy and ticks. Be alert for poisonous snakes. First-aid assistance is available at the visitor centers or from park personnel.

Remember. Historic artifacts within National Park areas are protected under Federal law. The possession or use of metal detectors by park visitors or relic hunters is a serious offense punishable by a fine or imprisonment and the confiscation of

the equipment.

Picnicking is allowed only in designated areas. The possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages in the park is prohibited. So too are athletic or recreational activities which intrude on or interfere with visitors in the historic areas. If in doubt, ask a ranger or call 226-1981.

Your cooperation is essential in protecting and preserving the park for your continuing enjoyment and for the enjoyment of future generations.



Chimborazo Visitor Center occupies the site of one of the Confederacy's largest hospitals—Chimborazo General, a massive complex constructed in 1862 to accommodate the influx of wounded arriving daily within the Confederate capital. Called a "medical marvel," the hospital treated nearly 76,000 patients during the years of the Civil War. Today nothing remains of the hospital; but the open expanse of Chimborazo Park around the visitor center pays silent tribute to the Confederacy's struggle against disease and death.