



“I have always regretted that the last assault at Cold Harbor was ever made. . . . no advantage was gained to compensate for the heavy loss we sustained.”

Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant

Embattled Capital 1861-1865

Almost from the war's first shots Richmond was a focal point in the conflict. Although other Southern cities were more populous, or enjoyed safer locations, no place in the Confederacy combined as many important features as Richmond. Strategically placed on the James River, with an active commercial, manufacturing, and transportation infrastructure, Richmond stood tall as one of the South's premier cities. When the Confederate government established Richmond as its capital in May 1861, it ensured that central Virginia would be the center of the coming storm.

Richmond was worth fighting for. Tredegar Iron Works, perched on the riverbank, formed a prominent part of the city's industrial capability. Five railroads radiated from the city like spokes on a wheel, directly connecting Richmond with every part of the state, and indirectly linking it with the Deep South. Defending Richmond proved dangerous but not unmanageable. The Rappahannock, North Anna, Pamunkey, and Chickahominy rivers each offered substantial lines of resistance to block Northern armies.

Events elsewhere in the South elevated the importance of Richmond still more. A series of Union victories in early 1862 constricted the boundaries of the Confederacy. In February, Federal soldiers and

sailors wrested away control of the Tennessee River during battles at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson. The capture of New Orleans in April deprived the Confederacy of both its largest city and the mouth of the Mississippi River. Later footholds in the Carolinas, along the Confederacy's southeastern coast, damaged the South logistically and psychologically.

Faced with a long series of setbacks, Confederates found cause for optimism in the successful defense of Richmond in the Peninsula Campaign. Gen. Robert E. Lee's 1862 offensive, called the Seven Days' Battles, saved the city from capture. While other key locations toppled, Richmond held firm. Lee's success in protecting the capital city shaped the course of the war's middle years. Riding a wave of enthusiasm, Lee took the war to northern Virginia (the Second Battle of Manassas or Bull Run) and ultimately into Maryland (the Battle of Sharpsburg or Antietam) and Pennsylvania (the Battle of Gettysburg). Meanwhile Richmonders entrenched, using mostly slave labor to construct dozens of miles of earthen fortifications to protect the capital city.

The spring of 1864 brought a series of decisive changes to the war. Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant took charge of all the Union armies in

March and forged a strategy that threatened nearly every unconquered corner of the Confederacy. Federal troops launched offensives in Georgia and Louisiana that slowly eroded the transportation and supply systems of the South. In Virginia, Grant fielded three large armies that operated in separate parts of the state, yet in tandem with each other. None of the columns won startling victories, but their combined presence applied unceasing pressure on Richmond.

March 1864 also witnessed the arrival of the first African American prisoners of war in Richmond. The Union army had been organizing military units designated United States Colored Troops for some time, but their presence with the main Federal army in Virginia signaled a new era. As the fighting dragged on into summer, those regiments saw increasing activity in battles outside the capital, notably at New Market Heights and Fort Gilmer.

Because of its many railroad lines, and its proximity to the main Confederate army in Virginia, Richmond became a medical center early in the war with dozens of hospitals. By 1864 the government had pruned the number to only a few, most of them large facilities like Chimborazo that resembled small, independent cities. The in-

creasing shortages toward the end of the war affected these hospitals, too, adding another burden to the strained supply system in Virginia as well as elsewhere in the Confederacy.

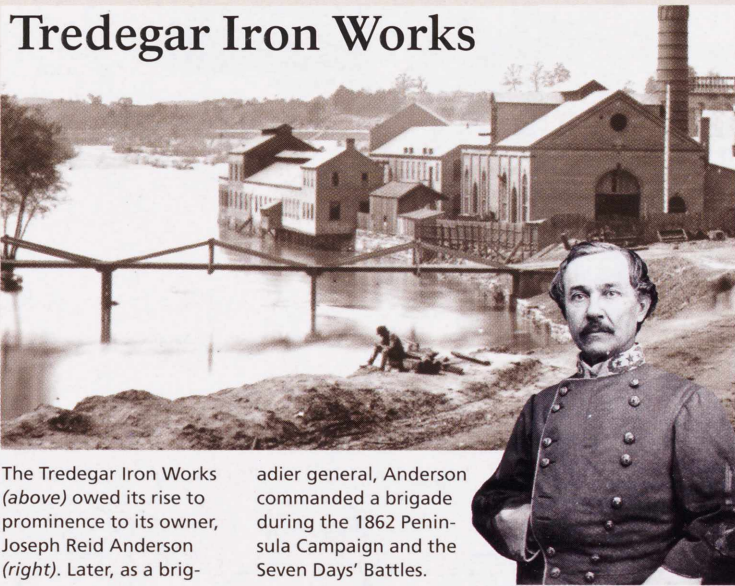
While many of Richmond's residents worried about their daily subsistence, the armies continued to hammer at each other. The fields and forests immediately around the city saw at least 25 battles, many occurring during the last 10 months of the war when the armies fought a series of actions south and east of Richmond. The fighting stretched beyond the James River to Petersburg, and Federal forces frequently attacked the defenses of both cities simultaneously. The capture of either city would ensure the capitulation of the other. On April 2, 1865, after 10 months of resistance, Petersburg fell, forcing the evacuation of Richmond.

Before Union soldiers entered Richmond on April 3, the Confederate government authorized the burning of warehouses and supplies, which resulted in considerable damage to the factories and houses in the city's business district. Before the charred ruins of Richmond had cooled, Lee surrendered the remnant of his army to Grant at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865. The collapse of the Confederacy followed swiftly.

Battery H, First Ohio Light Artillery, in action at Cold Harbor, Virginia, June 3-4, 1864, by Gilbert Gaul.

Highlights of the Richmond Story

Tredegar Iron Works



The Tredegar Iron Works (above) owed its rise to prominence to its owner, Joseph Reid Anderson (right). Later, as a brig-

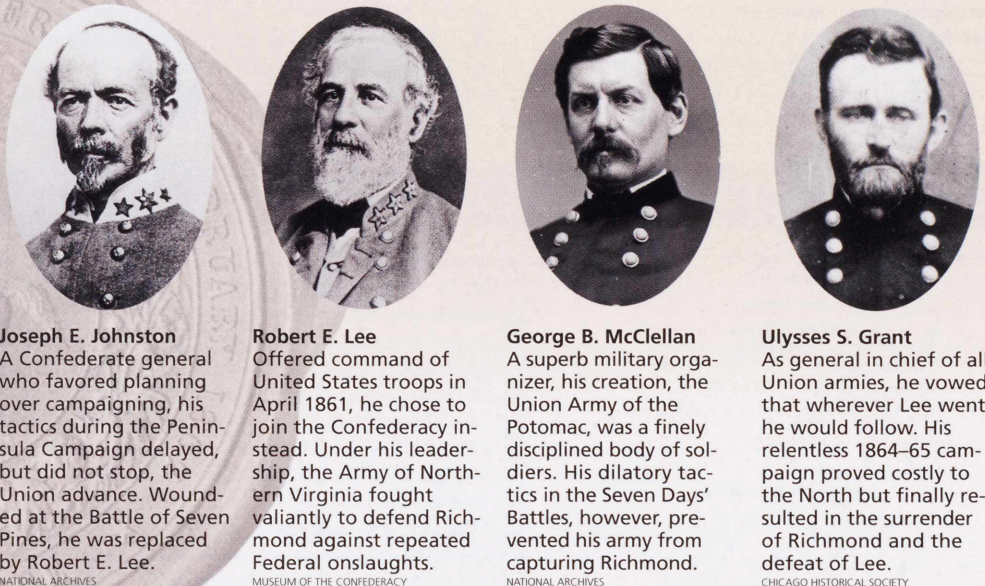
The Tredegar Iron Works was already well known when the Civil War began in 1861. Named for an iron works in Wales, Tredegar began in 1836 as a small forge and rolling mill. The site was shared with other milling operations that harnessed water power from the James River and Kanawha Canal to run the milling equipment. In the two decades before the war, Tredegar, along with other smaller iron foundries, made Richmond the center of iron manufacture in the southern United States. By 1860 the iron works, under the supervision of Joseph R. Anderson, used about 800 laborers, both black and white, free and slave.

During the Civil War, Tredegar covered nearly five acres, and operated day and night to meet the demands of

The Commanders

“Richmond must not be given up; it shall not be given up.”

Robert E. Lee, May 1862



Joseph E. Johnston A Confederate general who favored planning over campaigning, his tactics during the Peninsula Campaign delayed, but did not stop, the Union advance. Wounded at the Battle of Seven Pines, he was replaced by Robert E. Lee.

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

George B. McClellan A superb military organizer, his creation, the Union Army of the Potomac, was a finely disciplined body of soldiers. His dilatory tactics in the Seven Days' Battles, however, prevented his army from capturing Richmond.

Ulysses S. Grant As general in chief of all Union armies, he vowed that wherever Lee went he would follow. His relentless 1864-65 campaign proved costly to the North but finally resulted in the surrender of Richmond and the defeat of Lee.

Chimborazo: “Hospital on the Hill”

“Each man . . . gets well or dies [knowing] that there is someone by his pillow . . . doing all that can be done.”

Phoebe Yates Pember, hospital matron



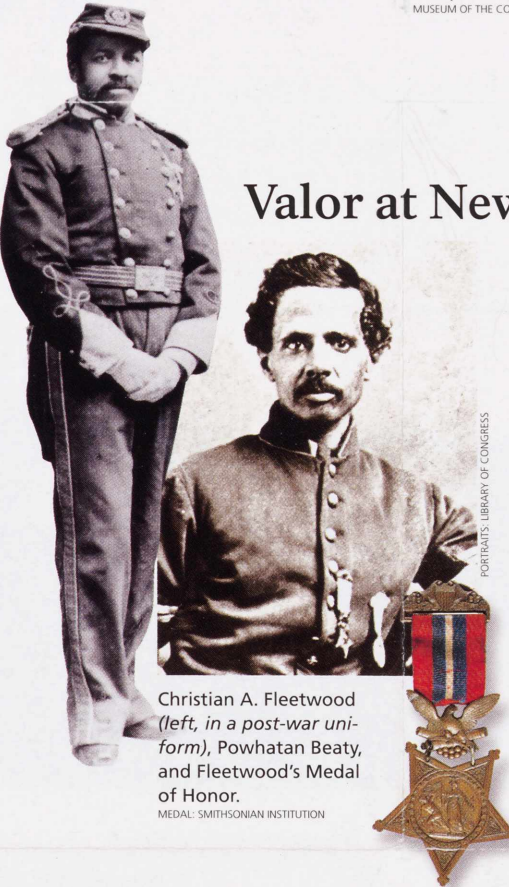
Chimborazo, seen here in April 1865, was one of the largest military hospitals of its day. Right: a surgeon's kit and medicine bottles.

Chimborazo Hospital opened in October 1861. It covered more than 40 acres and operated nearly 100 wards grouped into five divisions. Each ward housed up to 32 patients, giving the entire hospital a capacity of over 3,000. Every division had its own laundry, kitchen, and bathhouse, and a central bakery and dairy serviced the entire facility, making Chimborazo one of the Confederacy's best equipped hospitals as well as one of its largest.

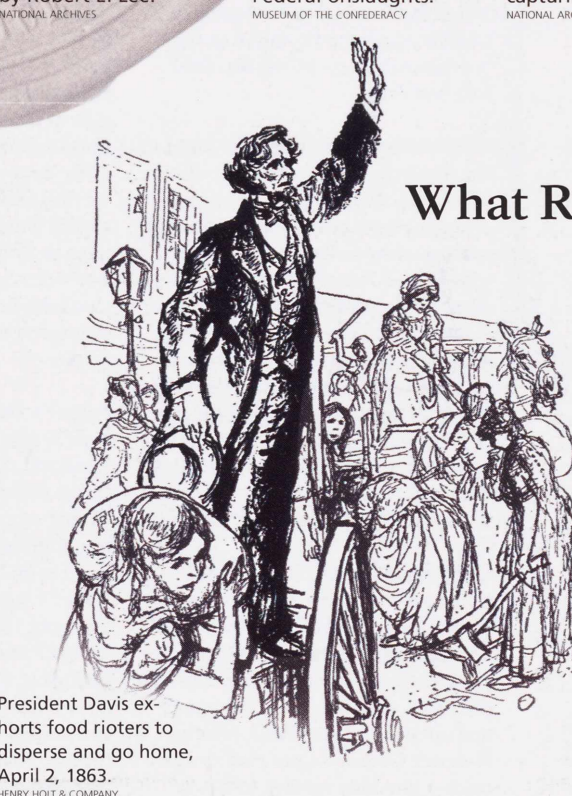
Over 76,000 Confederate sick and wounded were treated here. Chimborazo had a patient mortality rate of under 20 percent, dismal by today's standards but quite good in the 1800s, before antibiotics, antiseptic surgery, and widespread understanding of germ theory.

Valor at New Market Heights

Wherever black regiments were engaged in battle during the Civil War, their actions fully justified the policy of the U.S. Government in enlisting their services in 1862. Upon the opening of Grant's Overland Campaign of 1864, African American soldiers were a common feature of the armies before Richmond. Some of the hardest fighting done by black soldiers during the nine-month siege of Richmond and Petersburg occurred on September 29, 1864. Three brigades of United States Colored Troops took part in costly assaults against formidable Confederate entrenchments at New Market Heights. Fourteen black soldiers were later awarded the Medal of Honor for heroic conduct during this action. Two of those soldiers are shown at left.



Christian A. Fleetwood (left, in a post-war uniform), Powhatan Beaty, and Fleetwood's Medal of Honor.



President Davis exhorts food rioters to disperse and go home, April 2, 1863.

What Richmond Endured

Richmond never came under direct assault or even long-range bombardment but it endured its share of hardships. The war brought thousands of refugees, industrial workers, and civil and military officials into the city, as well as the riffraff that collect in any wartime capital. Its population grew to over 125,000 at a time when farmers had no crops to sell and resources had begun to dwindle.

Richmond's residents fought a losing battle against scarcity and inflation. Prices soared. Hunger was ever present. In April 1863, in the market area, there was a food riot that Jefferson Davis helped to mollify. By war's end food was so scarce that seeing a pigeon on the wing was a rarity, and clothing and shelter could be had only at great costs.

A Richmond Timeline 1861-1865

- February 18 Jefferson Davis is inaugurated president of the Confederate States of America in Montgomery, Ala.
- April 12 Confederate troops bombard Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, S.C. Civil War begins.
- April 17 Virginia State Convention adopts secession ordinance and instructs the governor to call for volunteers to protect the state from Federal encroachment.
- April 27 Virginia Convention invites the Confederate legislators to make Richmond seat of the new government.
- May 21 Richmond designated capital of the Confederacy.
- July 21 Confederates halt first Union attempt to capture Richmond at the First Battle of Manassas or Bull Run, Va.
- October 17 Chimborazo Hospital opens in Richmond.
- March 17 Union army assembles at Fort Monroe, beginning the Peninsula Campaign.
- May 15 Five Union ships, including the Monitor, are repulsed at Drewry's Bluff on the James River.
- May 31 Confederates launch major attack at Battle of Seven Pines, just east of the city. Joseph E. Johnston is wounded.
- June 1 Robert E. Lee assumes command of the Army of Northern Virginia.
- June 25 Seven Days' Battles begin with Union attack at Oak Grove, near Seven Pines.
- June 26 Battle of Beaver Dam Creek opens. Confederate offensive during the Seven Days' Battles.
- June 27 Battle of Gaines' Mill.
- June 29 Battle of Savage's Station.
- June 30 Battle of Glendale (or Frayser's Farm).
- July 1 Union victory at Battle of Malvern Hill signals end of Seven Days' Battles.
- January 1 Emancipation Proclamation declares free all slaves in areas in rebellion.
- March 13 Explosion at Confederate Ordnance Laboratory on Browns Island kills or injures 69, including 62 women.
- April 2 A "bread riot" breaks out on Main and Cary streets.
- May 3-4 Raid by Stoneman's Union cavalry threatens Richmond.
- May 15 Fire seriously damages Tredegar Iron Works, forcing weeks of repair.
- June 25-26 Union cavalry threaten city and destroy Virginia Central Railroad bridge over the North Anna River.
- July 3-4 Union forces strike the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad north of Richmond and destroy the bridge over the South Anna River.
- Summer Work on earth defenses outside Richmond increases.
- February 9 109 Union prisoners tunnel to freedom from Libby Prison; 48 are recaptured.
- February 29 Kilpatrick-Dahlgren Raid toward Richmond fails.
- May 5 The Union Army of the James lands below Richmond at Bermuda Hundred.
- May 11 Battle of Yellow Tavern just north of city.
- May 16 Benjamin F. Butler's Army of the James defeated at the Second Battle of Drewry's Bluff.
- May 23-26 Grant and Lee engage along North Anna River, 25 miles north of city.
- May 28 Battle of Haw's Shop, 13 miles northeast of the city.
- May 28-June 1 Armies draw closer to city. Fighting at Totopotomoy Creek.
- May 30 Battle of Bethesda Church is heard in Richmond.
- May 31-June 12 Battle of Cold Harbor. Grant fails to reach Richmond on the direct route.
- June 14 Grant's army begins crossing James River toward Petersburg.
- July 27-30 First Battle of Deep Bottom.
- August 14-20 Second Battle of Deep Bottom (or Fussell's Mill).
- September 29-30 Union offensive at Fort Harrison and New Market Heights.
- October Battles along Darbytown Road and at Fair Oaks prove indecisive.
- January 24 Battle of Trent's Reach is last gasp of Confederate navy below city.
- April 2 Confederate government departs Richmond by train.
- April 3 Union troops enter Richmond and help extinguish fires raging in the business district.
- April 4 President Lincoln visits Richmond.
- April 9 Grant and Lee discuss terms of surrender at Appomattox Court House, Va.

