



“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

Battery H at the Battle of Cold Harbor, Virginia, by Gilbert Gaul

Embattled Capital 1861–65

Richmond was a focal point in the conflict almost from the first shots of the Civil War. Although other Southern cities were more populous or had safer locations, no place in the Confederacy combined as many important features as Richmond. Its location on the James River was valuable strategically, as was its active commercial, manufacturing, and transportation infrastructure. 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 manageable. The Rappahannock, North Anna, Pamunkey, and Chickahominy rivers each offered substantial lines of resistance to block the United States Army.

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

Federal soldiers and sailors gained control of the Tennessee River during battles at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson. Federal capture of New Orleans in April deprived the Confederacy of its largest city and the mouth of the Mississippi River. Later footholds in the Carolinas, especially along the southeastern coast, damaged the Confederacy 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. Other key locations toppled but 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 used mostly enslaved people 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 United States

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 them 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 Federal army had been organizing the United States Colored Troops (USCT) 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

increasing 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 food, 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 surrender of the other. On April 2, 1865, after 10 months of resistance, Petersburg fell, forcing the evacuation of Richmond.

Before Federal soldiers entered Richmond on April 3, the Confederate government authorized the burning of warehouses and supplies. Factories and houses in the city’s business district suffered considerable damage. 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.

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, Anderson commanded a brigade in the 1862 Peninsula Campaign and the Seven Days’ Battles.

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 manufacturing 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 enslaved.

During the Civil War, Tredegar Iron Works covered nearly five acres. It operated day and night to meet the

demands of the Confederacy for artillery, ammunition, and other war-related materials. Despite shortages in iron and labor, the iron works made almost 1,100 cannon and provided the armor plating that protected several Confederate warships, including the CSS Virginia.



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

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 Federal advance. After being wounded at the Battle of Seven Pines, he was replaced by Robert E. Lee.



Robert E. Lee
In April 1861 Lee was offered command of United States troops but joined the Confederacy instead. He led the Army of Northern Virginia in a valiant fight to defend Richmond against repeated Federal attacks.



George B. McClellan
A superb military organizer, he created the US Army of the Potomac and developed a finely disciplined body of soldiers. His delaying tactics in the Seven Days’ Battles, however, prevented them from capturing Richmond.



Ulysses S. Grant
The general in charge of all Federal armies, he vowed that wherever Lee went he would follow. His relentless 1864–65 campaign proved costly to the United States but led to 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.

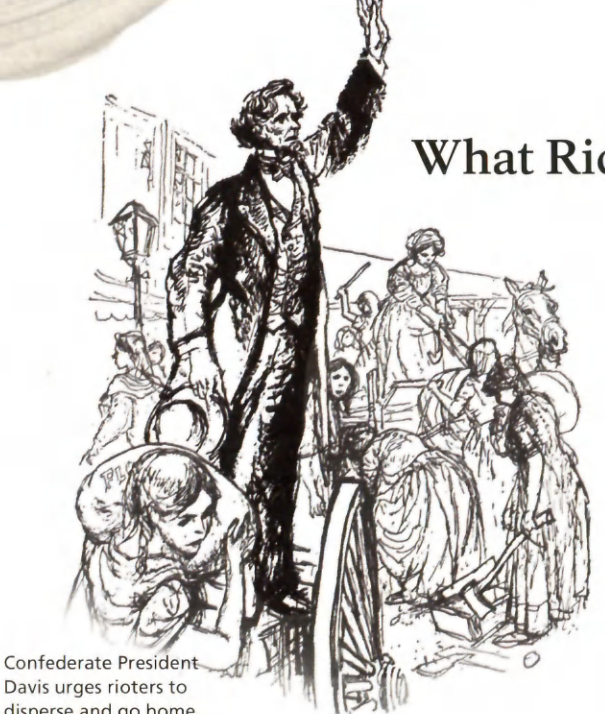
Chimborazo Hospital opened in October 1861. It covered more than 40 acres and operated nearly 100 wards grouped into five divisions. Each ward housed up to 32 patients, giving the entire hospital a capacity of over 3,000. Every division had its own laundry, kitchen, and bathhouse. A central bakery and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

Over 70,000 sick and wounded Confederates were treated here. The patient mortality rate was under 10 percent, which was remarkable in a time before antibiotics, antiseptic surgery, and widespread understanding of germ theory.

Valor at New Market Heights

With the opening of Grant’s Overland Campaign of 1864, African American soldiers became a common feature of Federal armies. The campaign brought the US Colored Troops—most of whom were formerly enslaved—to the battles for the capital of the Confederacy.

Some of their hardest fighting came on September 29, 1864. The Federals focused on heavily defended forts south of Richmond. Three USCT brigades took part in costly assaults on Confederate entrenchments at New Market Heights. These and other attacks that day succeeded in disrupting the Confederate defense of Richmond and Petersburg. Fourteen USCT soldiers were later awarded the Medal of Honor for their heroic conduct during this action. Two of the men are shown at left.



Confederate President Davis urges rioters to disperse and go home, April 2, 1863.

What Richmond Endured

Richmond never came under direct assault or 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. 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, a food riot occurred that Jefferson Davis helped to calm. 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 1861–65

- February 18 Jefferson Davis is inaugurated president of the Confederate States of America in Montgomery, AL.
- April 12 Civil War begins when Confederate troops bombard Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, SC.
- 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 legislators to make Richmond the seat of the Confederate government.
- May 21 Richmond designated capital of the Confederacy.
- July 21 Confederates halt first Federal attempt to capture Richmond at the First Battle of Manassas.
- October 17 Chimborazo Hospital opens in Richmond.
- March 17 US Army assemblies at Fort Monroe to begin the Peninsula Campaign.
- May 15 Five Federal ships, including the Monitor, are turned back at Drewry’s Bluff on the James River.
- May 31 Confederates launch major attack at Battle of Seven Pines, just east of the city. Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston is wounded.
- June 1 Robert E. Lee takes command of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia.
- June 25 Seven Days’ Battles begin with Federal 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 Federal 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 “Bread riot” breaks out on Main and Cary streets.
- May 3–4 Raid by Federal cavalry threatens Richmond.
- May 15 Fire damages Tredegar Iron Works, forcing weeks of repair.
- June 25–26 Federal cavalry threaten city and destroy Virginia Central Railroad bridge over the North Anna River.
- July 3–4 Federal forces strike the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad north of Richmond and destroy the bridge over the South Anna River.
- Summer Confederates increase their work on earthen defenses outside Richmond.
- February 9 109 Federal prisoners tunnel to freedom from Libby Prison; 48 are recaptured.
- February 29 Federal cavalry’s Kilpatrick-Dahlgren Raid toward Richmond fails.
- May 5 Federal Army of the James lands below Richmond at Bermuda Hundred.
- May 11 Battle of Yellow Tavern just north of city.
- May 16 Federal 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 29–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 Federal offensive at Fort Harrison and New Market Heights.
- October Indecisive battles along Darbytown Road and at Fair Oaks.
- January 24 Confederate navy defeated at the Battle of Trent’s Reach.
- April 2 Confederate government departs Richmond by train.
- April 3 Federal troops enter Richmond and help extinguish fires raging in the business district.
- April 4 President Lincoln visits Richmond.
- April 9 Grant and Lee meet at Appomattox Court House, VA, and Lee surrenders.

Capitol of Virginia and the Confederacy

US field hospital at Savage’s Station, 1862

Confederate guard assembly at Libby Prison, 1863

Richmond in the aftermath of fire and Federal occupation, 1865

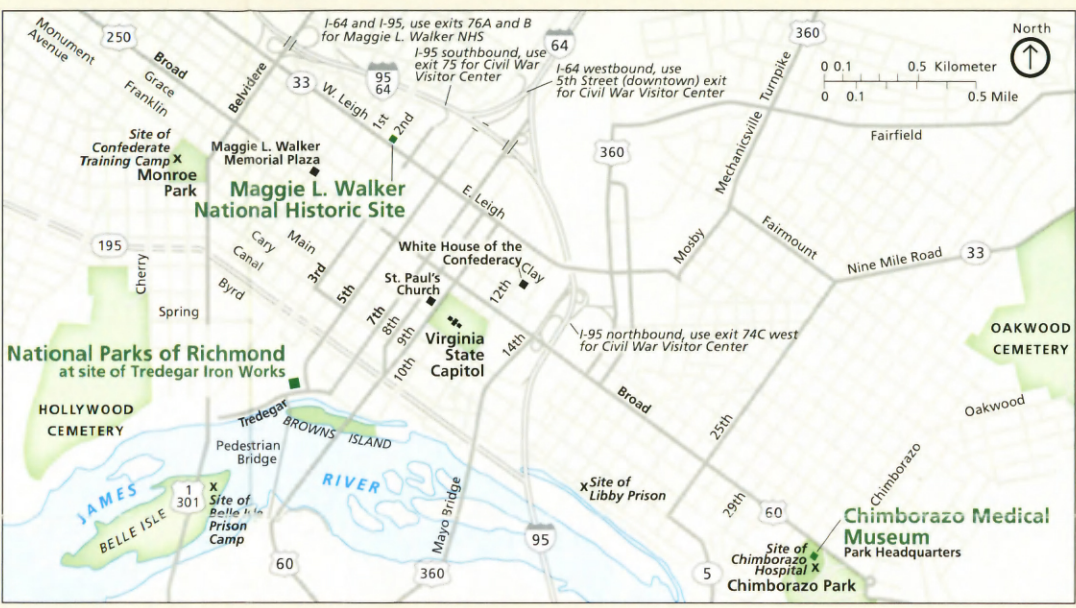
Touring Richmond Battlefields

Where to Start

Begin your visit at any park visitor center. Check the park website or official NPS App for closures, hours, park conditions, and events and tours. National Park Service staff will help plan your visit and provide historical information. Pick up schedules of programs and other events. Exhibits can be found year-round at Cold Harbor Visitor Center, Chimborazo Medical Museum, and the National Parks of Richmond at Tredegar Iron Works. Find more advice below the maps, along with safety and regulations.

GPS and Online Mapping Addresses

- Beaver Dam Creek Battlefield**
7423 Cold Harbor Road
Mechanicsville, VA 23111
- Chickahominy Bluff**
4300 Mechanicsville Turnpike
Richmond, VA 23223
- Chimborazo Medical Museum**
3215 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23223
- Cold Harbor Battlefield and Visitor Center**
5515 Anderson-Wright Drive
Mechanicsville, VA 23111
- Drewry's Bluff**
7600 Fort Darling Road
Richmond, VA 23237
- Gaines' Mill Battlefield**
6283 Watt House Road
Mechanicsville, VA 23111
- Fort Harrison Battlefield and Visitor Center**
8621 Battlefield Park Road
Henrico, VA 23231
- Malvern Hill Battlefield**
9175 Willis Church Road
Henrico, VA 23231
- National Parks of Richmond at Tredegar Iron Works**
470 Tredegar Street
Richmond, VA 23219
- Parker's Battery**
1801 Ware Bottom Spring Road
Chester, VA 23831
- Totopotomoy Creek Battlefield (Rural Plains)**
7273 Studley Road
Mechanicsville, VA 23116



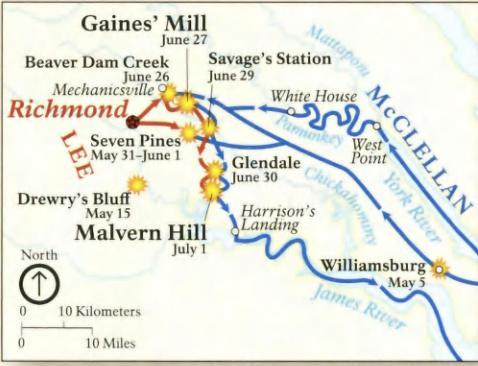
Battlefield Tour

Richmond National Battlefield Park consists of the 10 units listed below plus the National Parks of Richmond Visitor Center and the Chimborazo Medical Museum. Park units and related sites are color-coded according to the campaign in which each figured most prominently. Sites associated with the Seven Days' Battles that climaxed McClellan's 1862 Peninsula Campaign are shown in red. Sites associated with Grant's 1864 Overland Campaign are shown in blue.

A complete tour of the park involves an 80-mile drive as outlined on the map. If your time is limited, we recommend you go to these four places: the visitor center at historic Tredegar Iron Works and the Gaines' Mill, Malvern Hill, and Cold Harbor battlefields.

Check at park visitor centers for information about the 1862 Peninsula Campaign and Lee vs Grant driving tours, which have many stops near park battlefields. Each tour is part of a series of driving tours sponsored by Virginia Civil War Trails linking well-known and less familiar Civil War sites in Virginia.

1862 Seven Days' Battles



The 1862 Peninsula Campaign, a massive Federal operation against Richmond, began in March 1862 and ended five months later. Gen. George B. McClellan landed his troops on the tip of Virginia's southeastern peninsula, then pushed slowly toward the Confederate capital.

At Yorktown a small Confederate force blocked the Federal army by fortifying the neck of the narrow peninsula. Eventually the Federal navy opened a route past the defenses, and McClellan pressed the Confederates back to the outskirts of Richmond.

At the Battle of Seven Pines on May 31, Confederate Army commander Joseph E. Johnston fell wounded and was replaced by Robert E. Lee. Three weeks later, Lee attacked McClellan in a series of encounters known as the Seven Days' Battles. He forced the Federal army away from Richmond and changed the course of the war in Virginia.

After August only a small Federal fort, inactive for most of the war, remained on the lower peninsula. The sudden change in fortunes cleared the way for later battles in northern Virginia and the Confederate invasion of Maryland.

Chickahominy Bluff A part of the outer Confederate line defending Richmond, this bluff offered a view of Mechanicsville and the Chickahominy River valley. Within sight of the earthworks here, Gen. Robert E. Lee witnessed the start of the Battle of Beaver Dam Creek on June 26.

Beaver Dam Creek Part of the two-mile Federal front lies here in the valley of Beaver Dam Creek at Ellerson's Mill. The June 26 attack by Confederates was met by Federal artillery and infantry fire that stopped Lee's attack all along the line. A pedestrian bridge goes over the creek to the site of the heaviest fighting.

Gaines' Mill On June 27 Confederate infantry repeatedly assaulted the fortified Federal line along Boatwain Creek, about one mile from the mill. By nightfall both armies had suffered over 15,000 casualties in the heaviest fighting of the Seven Days' Battles. The Watt House (not open to the public) was built about 1820 for the owner of a mid-sized plantation. It served as headquarters for Federal Gen. Fitz John Porter. Monuments honor Confederate troops from Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas. Two trails (1.5 and 2 miles) go to key areas of the battlefield.

Glendale (Frayer's Farm) On June 30 Federal troops protected the vital crossroads near the old Frayer farm, Glendale, while McClellan's army retreated south toward Malvern Hill. Confederate forces repeatedly attacked the position through the afternoon but failed to carry it. The next day, when a Confederate general said it looked like McClellan would

escape, a frustrated Lee responded: "Yes, he will get away because I cannot have my orders carried out." Historic markers explain details at the intersection of Darbytown, Willis Church, and Charles City roads.

Malvern Hill Fought July 1, this was the last of the Seven Days' Battles, after which McClellan withdrew to his base at Harrison's Landing. The Federals, on the defensive, dug no trenches. Instead they stood in 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 Federal left and the swampy lowlands on the right forced the Confederates to advance across open ground. Part of the battlefield has been restored to its 1862 appearance and cannon mark Federal and Confederate artillery positions. Two 1.5-mile walking trails go through this area.

Drewry's Bluff On May 15 five Federal vessels, including the famous ironclad *Monitor*, attacked the fort but were driven off. The successful defense prevented Richmond from being shelled early in the war, and the presence of the fort was a deterrent to other Federal naval forays up the James River. John F. Mackie, a corporal in the US Marine Corps, was later awarded the Medal of Honor for conspicuous bravery during the attack. He was the first US Marine to receive the medal. The fort and surrounding area served as the Confederate Naval Academy and Marine Corps Camp of Instruction during much of the war. Exhibits along a short trail give details of the fort's history.

1864 Overland Campaign



Ulysses S. Grant's 1864 Overland Campaign began with the Battle of the Wilderness and continued through Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, and on to Petersburg. Unlike some earlier campaigns, this was part of a coordinated surge all across the South.

Other Federal armies operated in the Shenandoah Valley in western Virginia, below Richmond on the Bermuda Hundred peninsula, and against the important rail and industrial city of Atlanta, Georgia. The combined pressure ultimately stretched Confederate military resources beyond their capacity.

Totopotomoy The armies arrived here on May 29, 1864, and fought two days. The Shelton House witnessed the battle, which was inconclusive. Back in the 1750s, Patrick Henry lived nearby and visited the Sheltons often. He eventually married their daughter Sarah. The 1.5-mile trail goes by battlefield earthworks. The Shelton House is open on summer weekends.

Cold Harbor Here Confederates blocked Grant's path to Richmond by building six miles of entrenchments between Bethesda Church and the Chickahominy River. On June 1 and June 3, Federal forces tested these defenses with massive, ill-conceived assaults. The June 3 fighting alone saw nearly 6,000 Federals wounded or killed, most of them in one hour. The two-week battle's casualties for both armies were at least 16,000 men. The trenches along the 1.25-mile tour road are fine examples of Civil War field fortifications.

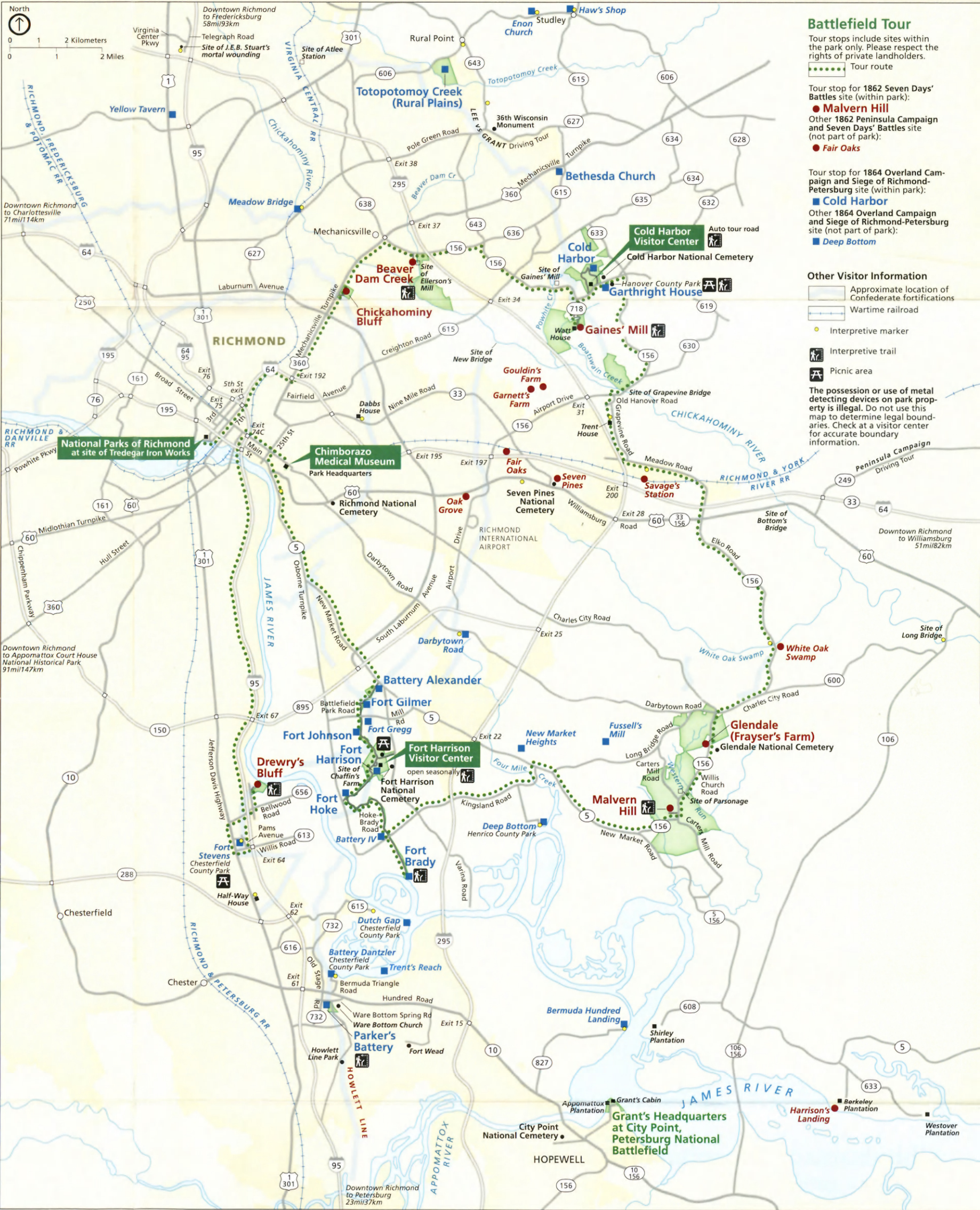
The Battle of Cold Harbor changed the war in the East from a war of maneuver to one of siege. It also influenced the strategy and tactics of future wars. It showed that well-placed entrenchments filled with soldiers and supported by artillery were almost impregnable to frontal assaults. Three miles of trails go through the battlefield. Cold Harbor National Cemetery contains remains of over 2,000 Federal soldiers, over 1,300 unknown.

Garthright House This house served as a Federal hospital during the Battle of Cold Harbor and afterward as a

Confederate hospital. The house, parts of which date to the 1700s, is not open to the public. Nearby, Hanover County's Cold Harbor Park has a 1-mile walking trail past Federal artillery and infantry trenches.

Fort Harrison, New Market, and Vicinity After Cold Harbor, General Grant crossed the James River and directed his main effort against Petersburg. Federal soldiers captured Fort Harrison on September 29 in a surprise attack designed to prevent Lee from shifting troops to another sector of operations. Federal troops occupied and enlarged the fort, which forced Confederates to realign their southern defenses of Richmond. Exhibits and signs along a walking trail provide details of the battle and the fort. Forts Gilmer, Gregg, Johnson, and Hoke were connected by miles of Confederate field fortifications. Fort Brady anchored the Federal line from Fort Harrison. It was built after September 29 to stop Confederate gunboats moving downriver to threaten Grant's supply system.

Parker's Battery This small Confederate artillery position was part of the Howlett Line, a chain of entrenchments that stretched from Battery Dantzler on the James River south toward the Appomattox River. In spring of 1864, the line had stopped the Army of the James and forced the Federal troops back into Bermuda Hundred peninsula. The Confederates then built this stronghold to help to seal off the southerly route to Richmond. A short walking trail begins at the parking area.



Cannon at Malvern Hill



Artillery emplacement at Drewry's Bluff



Entrenchments at Cold Harbor



Park information in downtown Richmond



Watt House at Gaines' Mill Battlefield



Beaver Dam Creek

About Your Visit Distinctive brown signs identify each unit in the park. Most have visitor facilities with exhibits and an audio station and short self-guiding trails. Walking these trails is the best way to understand the battlefields. Help us maintain historic features by staying on designated walking trails. Picnic areas are at Fort Harrison and the Garthright House.

Accessibility We strive to make facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to a visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check the park website. Service animals are allowed in all units.

Safety, Rules, and Regulations While every effort is made to provide for your safety, you must remain alert and cautious. • Park roads are narrow and winding. Obey speed limits and warning signs. • Park only in paved areas. • Stay on designated trails. • Do not stray into woods. Poison ivy, ticks, and poisonous snakes are here. • First aid is available at the visitor centers or from park staff.

Federal laws protect all natural and cultural features in the park. • Metal detectors are prohibited. Possession or use is punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment and possible loss of equipment. • Dogs must be leashed.

• Athletic and recreational activities that intrude on or interfere with visitors in historic areas are not allowed. • Picnic only in designated areas. • Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.

For firearms regulations ask a ranger or check the park website.

National Park Foundation. Join the park community. www.nationalparks.org

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More Information Richmond National Battlefield Park 3215 East Broad Street Richmond, VA 23223 804-226-1981 www.nps.gov/rich Visit us on social media.

Use the official NPS App to guide your visit.

Emergencies call 911

Richmond National Battlefield Park is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. Learn about national parks at www.nps.gov.

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National Park Service Civil War Sites in Virginia

- 1 Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park
- 2 Manassas National Battlefield Park
- 3 Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park
- 4 Richmond National Battlefield Park
- 5 Appomattox Court House National Historical Park
- 6 Petersburg National Battlefield
- 7 Fort Monroe National Monument