



Foundation Document Overview

Petersburg National Battlefield

Virginia



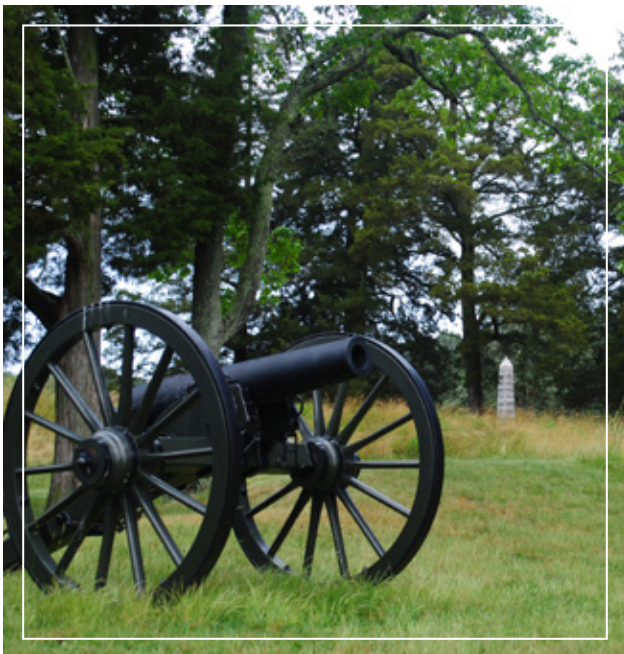
Contact Information

For more information about the *Petersburg National Battlefield Foundation Document*, contact: pete_superintendent@nps.gov or (804) 732-3531 or write to: Superintendent, Petersburg National Battlefield, 5001 Siege Rd, Petersburg, VA 23803

Purpose



*PETERSBURG NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD
preserves the historic sites,
structures, and landscapes where
the Civil War campaign, siege, and
defense of Petersburg took place,
and fosters an understanding of
these events, their causes, impacts,
and legacy to individuals, the
community, and the nation.*



Significance

Significance statements express why Petersburg National Battlefield resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The longest in both time (9.5 months) and distance (37 miles) combative military front on American soil, the campaign, siege, and defense of Petersburg saw five critical battles (the Second Battle for Petersburg, the Battle of the Crater, the assault on Fort Stedman, Five Forks, and the Third Battle for Petersburg) that effectively reduced the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia by eliminating its logistical capabilities, and resulted in the evacuation of the Confederate government from its capital, Richmond, Virginia.
- Reflecting both the causes and consequences of the Civil War, the Eppes Plantation, upon which more than 100 enslaved people worked, in 1864–65 served as the command headquarters for Lt. General Ulysses S. Grant while he oversaw all Union Army operations in the final year of the Civil War.
- Petersburg National Battlefield protects surviving Union and Confederate trenches, breastworks, and earthen fortifications, an assemblage that stretched along a 37-mile front and reflects the evolution of military strategy and trench warfare technology during the final desperate years of the Civil War.



Significance

- In order to supply and sustain two Union armies of more than 100,000 soldiers positioned on an operational front encompassing 176 square miles, City Point was transformed from a small port town at the confluence of the Appomattox and James Rivers into the largest logistical support of field operations during the entire Civil War, becoming one of the busiest seaports and railroad networks in the world at that time.
- The United States Colored Troops (USCT) engaged in more active combat throughout the Petersburg Campaign than any other campaign of the war, resulting in 15 of the 16 Medals of Honor awarded to American infantrymen during the Civil War being presented to troops for valor during the Siege of Petersburg. By the end of 1864, the first full USCT Corps was formed, representing the largest African American fighting force assembled during the Civil War.
- In the spring of 1865, President Abraham Lincoln spent two weeks based at City Point touring the Petersburg front, meeting with Union generals Grant and Sherman, as well as Admiral Porter, to lay out the framework for the terms of surrender for the Confederate armies and the restoration of the United States of America, and saw firsthand the devastation at both Petersburg and Richmond after these cities fell.
- Established in 1866 as one of the earliest national cemeteries, Poplar Grove National Cemetery honors and commemorates the ultimate sacrifice and serves as the final resting place of more than 6,000 Union soldiers including African Americans and American Indians who reflect the ethnic diversity of the individuals who fought for the United States during the Civil War.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Siege Landscape**
- **City Point**
- **Archeological Resources**
- **Museum Collections**
- **Poplar Grove National Cemetery**
- **Solemnity of Sites**

Petersburg National Battlefield contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Civil War Monuments**
- **Appropriate Recreation**
- **Natural Communities**



Description

Petersburg National Battlefield commemorates the siege and battles for control of the city of Petersburg that occurred during the final years of the Civil War. As Confederate forces prepared to defend the Confederate capital of Richmond, Lt. General Ulysses S. Grant realized that the key to capturing the city lay in controlling supply lines from the neighboring city of Petersburg. In an effort to take Petersburg, a pitched battle was fought on June 15–18, 1864, but Federal forces were unable to rout the Confederate defenders, resulting in a stalemate and beginning the 9.5 months siege of Petersburg.

As Union and Confederate armies dug into their positions, a network of earthworks, trenches, and fortifications took shape on the landscape east, south, and southwest of Petersburg. Numerous attempts to break the siege resulted in some of the bloodiest battles of the entire war as Union forces tightened their grip on Petersburg. Finally, on April 1, 1865, the Union victory at the Battle of Five Forks cut off the last Confederate supply line, the South Side Railroad. Followed the next day by the final breakthrough assault, Petersburg fell into Union hands, and resulted in the immediate evacuation of Richmond.

Established in 1926 to preserve the lands where these final desperate months of the Civil War unfolded, Petersburg National Battlefield protects more than 2,650 acres in and around the city of Petersburg. Because of the complexity and length of the siege, park lands are spread over a large geographic area and are managed as five administrative units: the Eastern Front, the Western Front, Five Forks, Poplar Grove National Cemetery, and Grant's Headquarters at City Point. These units are linked together by a 33-mile-long tour route that allows visitors to explore the historic sites of the Petersburg Campaign and connect to the historic events of the Civil War and the sacrifices made during the nine and one-half months siege of Petersburg.

