

Official Map and Guide

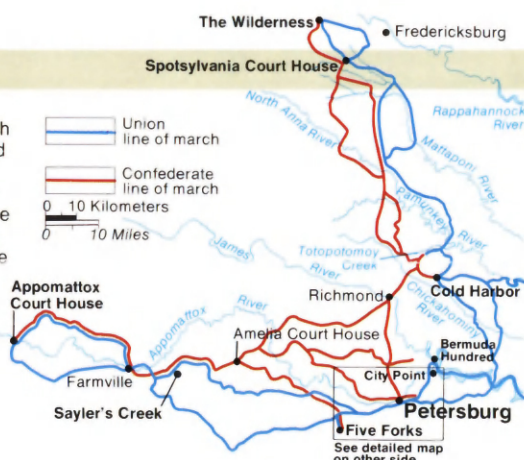


The Battle of Fort Gregg, 1865, from a painting by Sidney King.

The Campaign

The campaign that brought the armies to Petersburg and on to Appomattox Court House (see map at right) began in May 1864 when the 122,000-man Union army under Gen. Ulysses S. Grant crossed the Rapidan River and engaged Gen. Robert E. Lee's Confederate army of 65,000 in a series of hard-fought battles. For a month the two armies

clashed, marched, and clashed again. After each encounter, Grant moved farther southward and closer to Richmond. By the beginning of June the Federals were within 9 miles of the Confederate capital, but Lee still



blocked their path. At Cold Harbor on June 3 Grant tried frontal attack to crush the Confederate army and enter the city. He failed in a defeat marked by very heavy casualties. After Cold Harbor, Grant abandoned his plan to capture Richmond by direct assault. Instead, he moved his forces to the south side of the James River and on June 15-18

threw them against Petersburg, a key rail center on the Confederate supply line. The city might have fallen then had Federal commanders pressed home their assaults and prevented the few Confederate defenders from holding on until Lee's army arrived from the north. When four days of combat failed to capture the city, Grant began siege operations.

The Commanders

Gen. Robert E. Lee (near right) commanded the Army of Northern Virginia, the main Confederate army in the East. His job was to defend the Richmond-Petersburg front. When Union forces crossed the Rapidan and headed south in May 1864, Lee told one of his officers, "We must destroy 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 question of time." Lee's worst fears were realized when the Federals reached the James and beyond and settled down to besiege Petersburg. As the months passed and the Union army's grip on the city tightened, all Lee could do was try to stave off the inevitable as long as possible.

Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant (near left) commanded all Federal forces as of March 1864 and possessed the authority to commit the total war resources of the Union against the Confederacy. His primary objective was to "get possession" of Lee's army. "With the capture of [this] army," he said, "Richmond would necessarily follow." Grant's long campaign of attrition against

Lee from the Wilderness through Spotsylvania and Cold Harbor to Petersburg has been called one of the first examples of modern warfare. Although taking an enormous toll in human lives, for which Grant was sharply criticized, it did help to wear down Confederate resistance and end the Civil War sooner than might have otherwise been possible.

"...a mere question of time"

"The key to taking Richmond is Petersburg." That's what General Grant believed when his forces began arriving at the eastern environs of the city in mid-June 1864. It was the four railroad lines and key roadways that made Petersburg important. If these could be cut, then the city could no longer provide Richmond with much-needed supplies, equipment, and subsistence. Many believed that if Richmond fell, the war would be over. Others, however, like Grant, knew that only when Lee's army was eliminated would the war come to an end.

In a grim 10-month struggle—the longest siege in American warfare—Grant's army gradually but relentlessly encircled Petersburg and cut Lee's supply lines from the south. For the Confederates it was 10 months of desperately hanging on, hoping the people of the North would tire of the



Battery 5, part of the original Confederate line.

war. For soldiers of both armies it was 10 months of rifle bullets, artillery, and mortar shells, relieved only by rear-area tedium: drill and more drill, salt pork and corn meal, burned beans and bad coffee.

Although Grant's first attempts to capture Petersburg from the east on June 15-18 failed miserably

The Battle of the Crater, from a painting by John A. Elder.



The Battle of the Crater: A Good Plan Goes Wrong

Shortly after the siege began, members of the 48th Pennsylvania Infantry, many of whom were coal miners before the war, began digging a tunnel toward a Confederate fort at

Pegram's (sometimes called Elliott's) Salient, southeast of Petersburg. The plan: explode four tons of gunpowder under the salient and send a large body of troops through the gap created

in the enemy's defenses by the explosion. If the plan succeeded, Petersburg might be captured without a long siege and the war could be shortened by many months. The tunnel took a

month to dig and was 511 feet long, with lateral galleries at the end to hold the powder. When the explosion took place on the morning of July 30, it blew up a Confederate artil-

lery battery and left a crater about 170 feet long, 60 feet wide, and 30 feet deep. Union troops, instead of going around the crater, plunged directly into it and were unable to go

any farther. Confederate counterattacks retook the position, inflicting more than 4,000 Federal casualties. The siege would continue.



Union mortar "Dictator" outside Petersburg, 1864.

bly and cost him 10,000 men, his soldiers did manage to cut two of the railroads leading into the city and gain control of several roads. In August he struck out to the south and west against the Weldon Railroad. After 3 days of fierce fighting in brutal heat, Union troops were astride the iron rails near Globe Tavern. Several days later, on August 25, Lee's Confederates scored a minor victory at Ream's Station, 5 miles south of Globe Tavern, but failed to break the Federal hold on the railroad.

By October, Grant had moved 3 miles west of the Weldon Railroad and the noose around Petersburg tightened. The approach of winter brought a general halt to activities. Still there was the everyday skirmishing, sniper fire, and mortar shelling. By early February 1865, Lee had only 60,000 cold and hungry soldiers in the trenches to oppose Grant's well-equipped force of 110,000. On February 5-7, Grant extended his lines westward to Hatcher's Run and forced Lee to lengthen his own thinly stretched defenses. Federal supplies rattled continuously over the newly completed U.S. Military Railroad from City Point to the front.

By mid-March it was apparent to Lee that Grant's

superior force would either get around the Confederate right flank or pierce the line somewhere along its 37-mile length. The Southern commander hoped to break the Union stranglehold on Petersburg by attacking Grant at Fort Stedman. Plans were to breach the Union line, hold the gap, and gain access to Grant's military railroad a short distance beyond. If it worked, Grant might have to relinquish positions to the west, and Lee could shorten his own lines. On March 25, Confederates overpowered Fort Stedman only to be crushed by a Union counter-attack.

With victory near, Grant unleashed Gen. Philip H. Sheridan at Five Forks on April 1. His objective: the Southside Railroad. Sheridan smashed the Confederate forces under George Pickett and gained access to the tracks beyond. On



Appomattox Manor, City Point, Va.

April 2, Grant ordered an all-out assault, and Lee's right flank crumbled. A Homeric defense at Confederate Fort Gregg saved Lee from possible street fighting in Petersburg. On the night of April 2, Lee evacuated Petersburg. Appomattox Court House, the site of the final surrender, was but a week away.

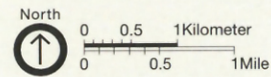
Petersburg Tours

About Your Visit

Start your visit at the visitor center in the park's main unit, east of the city of Petersburg just off Va. 36. Exhibits and a map program help explain the complex operations of the 9½-month siege. The park preserves extensive fortifications and battlefields, including the battlefield of Five Forks 25 miles southwest of the visitor center at the intersection of Va. 613 and 627. City Point, the Union army's headquarters and major supply center during the siege, is also part of the park. It is located in the city of Hopewell, Va., and can be reached from the visitor center by following Va. 36 and 156 to Va. 10. Turn left on Va. 10 and right on Main St. (which becomes Appomattox St.), then left on Cedar Lane to Appomattox Manor.

Please stay on designated walking trails. Walking on historic earthworks slowly destroys them. Hunting for artifacts with or without a metal detector within park boundaries is prohibited by law. If you have a question about the location of boundaries, ask the park ranger. Copies of park regulations are posted at the visitor center; we urge you to read them. Park roads are often congested; please drive slowly and safely.

For information about the park and its programs, write the Superintendent, Petersburg National Battlefield, 1539 Hickory Hill Road, Petersburg, VA 23803. Information is also available at www.nps.gov/pete on the Internet.



Note: Lee's Retreat driving tour begins at South Side Station. Lee vs. Grant driving tour ends at South Side Station. Both are part of Virginia Civil War Trails, a network of driving tours linking Civil War sites in Virginia.

Siege Line Tour

This 16-mile driving tour takes you to park areas south and west of town. It begins after exiting the main unit at Crater Road (U.S. 301). This is the original Jerusalem Plank Road of the war period, one of the main highways leading into the city from the southeast. Modern development has destroyed most of the trenches, but traces can still be found. Many sites are on both public and private land. Please honor property lines where posted. And remember: you will be traveling on both state and county roads, so be alert to frequent and fast-moving traffic. After turning left on Crater Road, proceed about 1½ miles to the site of Fort Sedgwick

at the southeast corner of Crater Road and Morton Ave. The site is not marked and there are no parking facilities. A nearby marker identifies the site near Rives' Salient, defended on June 9, 1864, by local militia in the first attack on the Petersburg lines.

9 Fort Sedgwick No trace remains of this key Union fort. It was built in July-August 1864 to control the Jerusalem Plank Road and named for Gen. John Sedgwick, killed in the Battle of Spotsylvania. It was nicknamed "Fort Hell" because of the intense Confederate mortar and sniper fire it attracted. This was the site of a major assault by the Federal IX Corps against Rives'

Battlefield Tour

This four-mile driving tour of the park's main unit is designed to be used at your own pace. Besides audio stations and way-side exhibits, some of the stops have short, interpretive walking trails. Your visit will be more enjoyable and informative if you take time to explore them.

1 Confederate Battery 5 Located behind the visitor center, this was one of the strongest works on the original Confederate defense line (the Dimmock Line). Union troops captured it on June 15, 1864. A trail leads to the site where the "Dictator," a huge mortar used by the Union army to shell Petersburg, was located.

To follow the Battlefield Tour route, take the second right after passing the entrance station.

2 Confederate Battery 8 This battery was captured by black U.S. troops and renamed Fort Friend for the Friend House located nearby. The fort was re-facced and served as a supporting artillery position for the duration of the siege.

3 Confederate Battery 9 Black U.S. troops of Hink's Division captured this position during the first day's fighting. The winter quarters of the Union IX Corps were in the surrounding area. This site also features examples of a picket and infantry trench, a bomb-proof, a soldier's winter hut, and a sutler's store. Check at the visitor center for the summer schedule of living history events held here annually. A trail leads to the site of Meade Station, an important supply and hospital depot on

the City Point and Army Line, a military railroad built during the siege. It is a 10-minute walk.

4 Harrison Creek Driven from their original line in the opening battle on June 15, 1864, Confederate forces fell back and dug in along this stream. After occupying this position for two days, they withdrew to a new line closer to Petersburg that they held until the fall of the city on April 2, 1865. In March 1865 the main Confederate advance of Lee's last offensive (the Battle of Fort Stedman) was halted along this stream.

5 Fort Stedman This Union stronghold was the focus of a Confederate attack on March 25, 1865, in Lee's attempt to relieve heavy pressure west of the city. The loop trail leads to

Colquitt's Salient, from which the Confederate attack originated. The trail passes the monument to the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery, commemorating its role in the June 18, 1864, attack on Colquitt's Salient in which it sustained the greatest regimental loss in a single action of the Civil War.

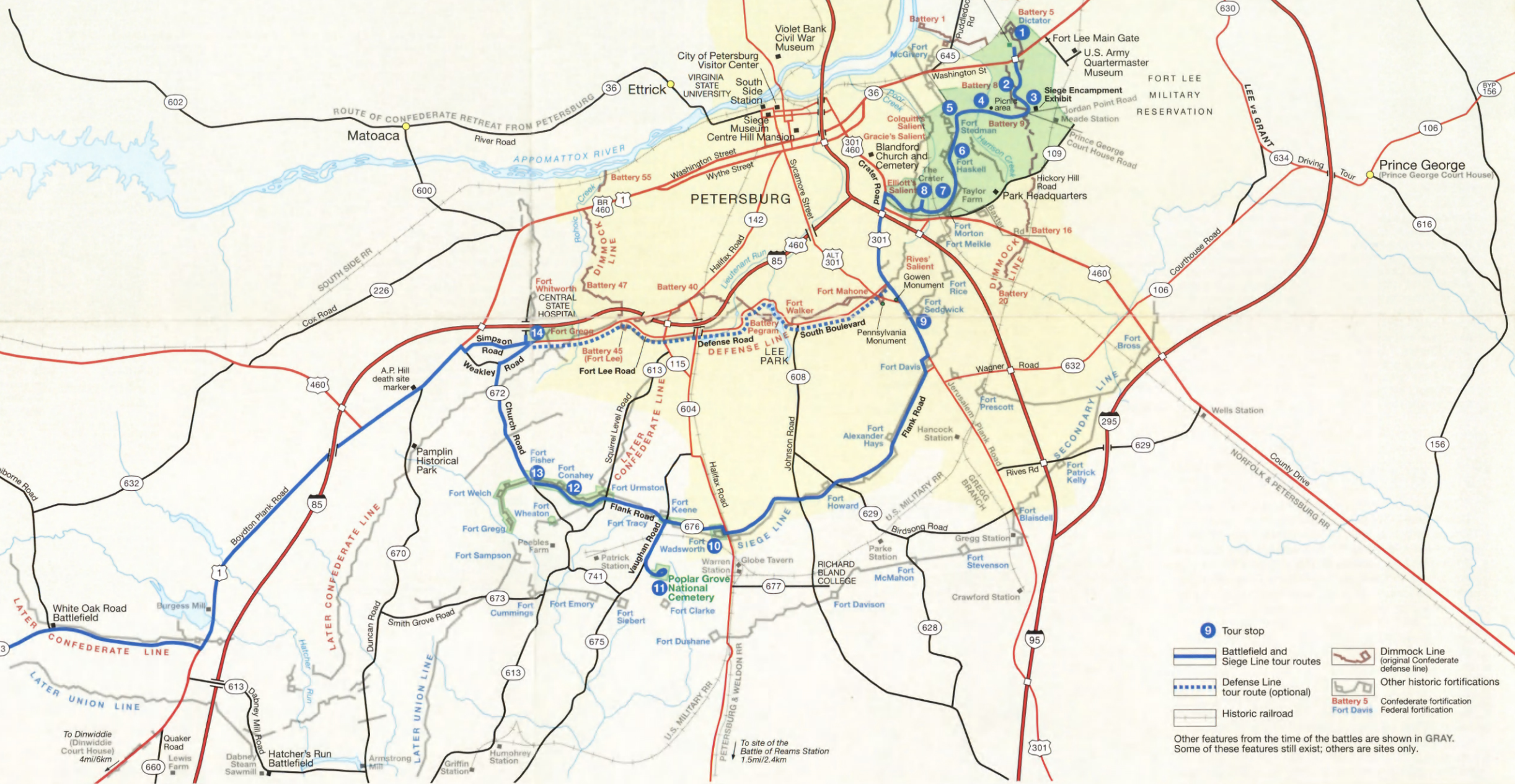
6 Fort Haskell Union artillery and very heavy infantry fire stopped the Confederate southward advance here during the Battle of Fort Stedman. Federals who had been driven down the line of works were jammed so tightly into this fort that most could only load weapons and pass them forward to be fired.

7 Taylor Farm All of the Taylor farm buildings were destroyed at the start of

the siege. Only the foundations of the Taylor kitchen and slave quarters remain. Along this ridge nearly 200 pieces of Union artillery were concentrated and fired against the Confederate fortifications on the opposite ridge during the Battle of the Crater.

8 The Crater Here on July 30, 1864, at a part of Lee's line known as Elliott's Salient, a Union mine was exploded under a Confederate fort in an attempt to create a breakthrough. An infantry attack through the gap, however, failed. Walk the trail and learn about one of the most incredible episodes of the Civil War.

This ends the Battlefield Tour. To begin the Siege Line Tour, turn left onto Crater Road after exiting the main unit of the park.



- 9 Tour stop
- Battlefield and Siege Line tour routes
- Defense Line tour route (optional)
- Historic railroad
- Dimmock Line (original Confederate defense line)
- Other historic fortifications
- Confederate fortification
- Federal fortification

Other features from the time of the battles are shown in GRAY. Some of these features still exist; others are sites only.

Five Forks

By the spring of 1865, the last remaining supply line into Petersburg was the South Side Railroad. On March 29, 1865, Grant sent his forces on a westward movement to cut this major artery, knowing that it would cause Lee to abandon Petersburg and Richmond. Countering this move, Lee sent a force of 10,000 infantry and cavalry under Maj. Gen. George E. Pickett to an important road junction called Five Forks, which protected the railroad. On April 1, 22,000 Northern cavalry and infantry under Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan attacked Pickett's force at Five Forks and captured almost 2,000 prisoners while suffering a loss of less than 1,000 men. The next day Grant assaulted Petersburg and the city was evacuated that night. Note: The roads in the Five Forks area are public thoroughfares and heavily traveled. Please use caution. The information station is open on a seasonal basis only. Check at the Petersburg National Battlefield Visitor Center for times of operation. The land around the Gillingham Plantation, "Burnt Quarter," is private property and is not open to the public. Please respect the rights and privacy of the property owners.

City Point

Between June 1864 and April 1865, City Point was transformed from a sleepy village of less than a hundred inhabitants into a bustling supply center for the 100,000 Federal soldiers on the siege lines in front of Petersburg and Richmond. By the spring of 1865, when the Union army forced Lee to abandon Petersburg, more than 280 new buildings of all descriptions, a half mile of new wharves, and a vastly expanded railroad remained in City Point to mark its presence. Grant's headquarters on the lawn of Dr. Richard Eppes's home, Appomattox Manor, where tents or cabins occupied nearly every available square foot of ground, became a nerve center for the Northern war effort. From here the Union telegraph system provided rapid transfer of information to all field commanders and the national capital, enabling Grant to coordinate operations in all theaters of the war. President Lincoln visited the area on two occasions, and was here for two of the last three weeks of his life. Grant's headquarters cabin, built in November 1864, stands on its original site near the Eppes house. Furnishings are typical of those used during the siege.

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