
National Park Service
Cultural Landscapes Inventory

2002

Revised: 1/2026



Chickahominy Bluff
Richmond National Battlefield Park

Table of Contents

Introduction

General Information

Concurrence Information

Geographic Information and Location Map

Management Information

National Register Information

Chronology & Physical History

Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

Uses

Condition

Treatment

Bibliography & Supplemental Information

Introduction

The Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI)

The Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) is a comprehensive inventory of all cultural landscapes in the National Park System. Landscapes that are listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places, or are otherwise managed as cultural resources and in which the National Park Service has, or plans to acquire, legal interest are included in the inventory. The CLI identifies and documents each landscape's location, size, physical development, landscape characteristics, character-defining features, and condition. Cultural landscapes have approved CLIs when concurrence with the findings is obtained from the park superintendent and all required data fields are entered into the Cultural Resources Information System (CRIS-CL) database. In addition, for landscapes not currently listed on the National Register and/or without adequate documentation, concurrence is required from the State Historic Preservation Officer, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, or the Keeper of the National Register.

Scope of the CLI

The information contained within the CLI is compiled from primary and secondary sources and through on-site surveys of the landscape. The level of investigation is dependent upon scoping the need for information. The baseline information collected provides a comprehensive look at the historical development and significance of the landscape. Documentation and analysis of the existing landscape identifies character-defining characteristics and features and allows for an evaluation of the landscape's integrity and an assessment of the landscape's condition. The CLI also includes historic maps, drawings, and images; photographs of existing conditions; and a site plan that indicates major features. The CLI documents the existing condition of park landscape resources and identifies impacts, threats, and measures to stabilize condition. This information can be used to develop strategies for improved stewardship. Unlike a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR), the CLI does not provide management recommendations or treatment guidelines for the cultural landscape, but it may identify stabilization measures.

The Cultural Resources Information System (CRIS)

CRIS is the National Park Service's database of cultural resources on its lands, consisting of archeological sites, historic structures, ethnographic resources, and cultural landscapes. Cultural Resources Inventory System (CRIS) replaces three legacy inventory systems: ASMIS (archeology), CLI (cultural landscapes), and LCS (historic structures); and it reinstates the former ERI (ethnographic resources). This Cultural Landscape Inventory document reflects the information in a corresponding CRIS Cultural Landscape record.

Statutory and Regulatory Foundation

The legislative, regulatory, and policy directives for conducting and maintaining the CLI within CRIS are:

- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (16 USC 470h-2(a)(1)) Sec. 110
- Executive Order 13287: Preserve America, 2003. Sec. 3 (a and c)
- Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Federal Agency Historic Preservation Programs
- Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, 1998. Std. 2
- Cultural Resource Management Guideline, 1997, Release No. 5, page 22; issued pursuant to Director's Order #28 (DO-28)

The NHPA requires the identification, evaluation, and nomination of historic properties to the National Register of Historic Places and the maintenance and expansion of an inventory of cultural resources. DO-28 requires a cyclic assessment of the current condition of cultural landscapes based on an assessment interval, with a default of six years.

Use

Beyond fulfilling legal and policy requirements, park staff can use the Cultural Landscape Inventory in the following ways:

- To learn about park cultural landscapes (all staff)
- To inform management decisions (park managers)
- To inform project planning and development (park managers, facility managers, project managers, compliance specialists)
- To monitor the condition of the cultural landscape and take measures to protect its significance and integrity (cultural resource managers, facility managers)
- To recognize the stabilization and treatment needs of landscape features and plan work within cultural landscapes to address the needs (facility managers, cultural resource managers)
- To understand the cultural value of natural systems in a cultural landscape (natural resource managers)
- To create programming and educational materials based on site history (interpretation and education specialists)
- To recognize impacts within cultural landscapes and enforce protection measures (visitor and resources protection staff)

General Information

Property Level and CLI Numbers

Inventory Unit Name: Chickahominy Bluff

Resource Classification: Component Landscape

CLI Identification Number: 300099

Parent Landscape: 300092

Inventory Status: Complete

Park Information

Park Name: Richmond National Battlefield Park

Alpha Code: RICH

Park Organization Code: 4800

Park District: RICH

Region: Northeast

Restricted: Yes

Landscape Description:

Chickahominy Bluff is one of twelve units of Richmond National Battlefield Park (NBP) in Virginia. The park preserves, protects, interprets, and commemorates Richmond Civil War battlefield landscapes, struggles for the capital of the Confederacy associated with the 1862 Seven Days' Battles, the 1864 Overland Campaign, and the 1884-1865 Richmond and Petersburg Campaigns, including the American military, social, and political history as exemplified by the New Market Heights Battlefield. The site became part of the park in 1960.

Chickahominy Bluff served as Robert E. Lee's headquarters during the Battle of Beaver Dam Creek on June 26, 1862. The bluff was an ideal location for Lee to oversee the military maneuvers and to coordinate his attack, which was his first military engagement as the commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. Unfortunately, due to the complexity of his plan, the delay of General Stonewall Jackson's troops, and the breakdown of communication, Lee's experience at Chickahominy Bluff was a frustrating one.

The 39-acre Chickahominy Bluff property is located northeast of Richmond, Virginia, just south of the Chickahominy River. It includes earthen fieldworks, visitor parking, and a short pedestrian trail that leads to a shortened view from the bluff. Visitor access to most of the property has been restricted to protect the resource from vandalism. Maintained lawns with scattered trees in the visitor areas transition to woodlands that protect the earthworks.

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

Chickahominy Bluff, part of the Richmond National Battlefield Park Historic District, possesses significance under National Register of Historic Places Criteria A, B, C, and D. Chickahominy Bluff is nationally significant under Criterion A in the area of Military for its association with the 1862 Seven Days Battles, where Robert E. Lee witnessed the beginning of the Battle of Beaver Dam Creek. The site is nationally significant under Criterion B for its association with the military career of General Robert E. Lee. The site is nationally significant under Criterion C in the area of Engineering for its remaining military fortifications. Lastly, the site is nationally significant under Criterion D in the area of Historic Archeology (Non-Aboriginal) for its surviving earthworks and the potential to investigate the evolution of nineteenth-century military engineering, design techniques, and technology over the course of the war. The overall period of significance is 1862-1865, beginning with construction of the earthworks and ending when the Civil War concluded.

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION SUMMARY AND CONDITION

The historic integrity of Chickahominy Bluff is evaluated by comparing landscape characteristics and features present during the period of significance, 1862-1865, with the existing conditions as assessed in 2023-2025. Many landscape characteristics and features from the period of significance remain today. The 37-acre property contains a series of defensive earthworks and two batteries. Most of these earthworks are maintained under a thick forest canopy. The lower, level area of the unit is part of the Chickahominy River floodplain, and is characterized by a marshy swamp.

Since 1865, some landscape characteristics and features at Chickahominy Bluff have changed. While the tree cover is not the historic condition of the site, it does aid in protecting the earthworks. The features still located at Chickahominy Bluff that contribute the Civil War period of significance are the natural features of the bluff and the swamp, which made this location ideal as a defensive position. The topographic features of the Confederate earthworks and batteries built at the edge of the bluff to provide cover for the soldiers. These earthworks have shown erosion since the period of significance and are now located under forest cover, but otherwise have good integrity. The property also has an entry drive and parking area, a trail leading visitors to a viewing platform, and several interpretive waysides.

Condition:

The overall condition of the Chickahominy Bluff landscape is "Fair," due to continued erosion and vegetative growth at the site, especially in regard to mature trees on the earthworks. Corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration on many of the landscape characteristics will cause the property to degrade to a poor condition. Preservation maintenance and/or use must be combined with corrective action to halt deterioration.

Landscape Hierarchy Description:

Chickahominy Bluff is a component landscape within the Richmond National Battlefield Landscape, which comprises the entire Richmond National Battlefield Park. In addition to Chickahominy Bluff, there are nine park units categorized as component landscapes: Beaver Dam Creek Battlefield, Cold Harbor Battlefield, Drewry's Bluff, Fort Harrison and vicinity, Gaines' Mill Battlefield, Glendale Battlefield, Malvern Hill Battlefield, Parker's Battery, and Totopotomoy Creek Battlefield at Rural Plains. Pending additional research, future component landscapes may include North Anna Battlefield and Chimborazo.

Landscape Type:

Historic Site

Other Names:

Other Name: Chickahominy Bluff

Other Name Type: Both Current And Historic

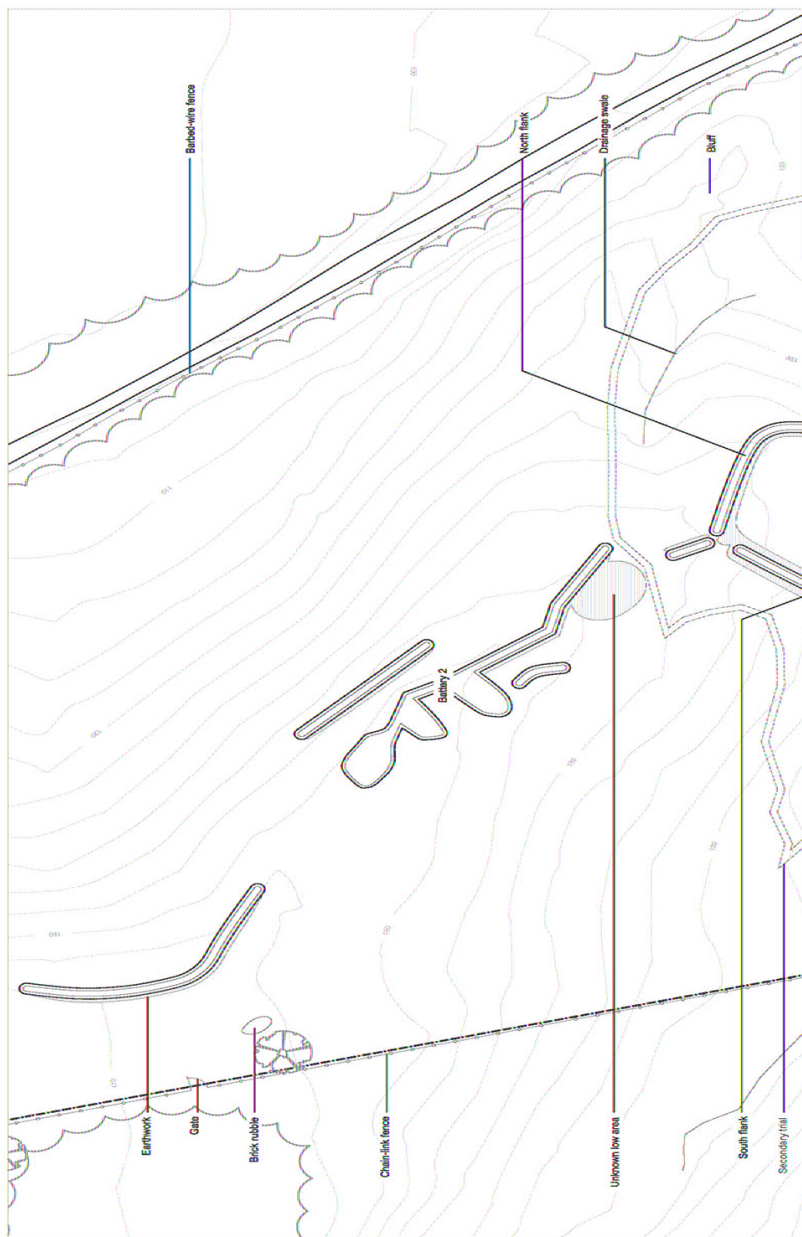
Site Plan



Site map, 1 of 3.



Site map, 2 of 3.



Site map, 3 of 3.

Concurrence Information

Concurrence Status:

Park Superintendent Concurrence:	Yes
Park Superintendent Date of Concurrence:	07/19/2002

Completion Status Explanatory Narrative:

The original CLI for Chickahominy Bluff was approved by the Superintendent on July 19, 2002. Condition reassessments for Chickahominy Bluff were approved by the superintendent on September 28, 2007, and October 21, 2008. Level II field survey work was performed by Nancy J. Brown, Cheryl Sams and summer intern Tim Layton in July 2000. Sams completed the research and writing of the text, which was edited by Brown. Existing conditions maps were prepared by Sams and intern M. Witters. Sams entered the information into the CLAIMS database.

This update was completed by Meaghan Papeika, Architectural Historian, and Tim Layton, Historical Landscape Architect, and reviewed by Jeff Killion, Historical Landscape Architect, at the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation. Field work was completed in February 2023 by Layton and Papeika. The cultural resource contact for the park is Lexie Lowe, Park Archeologist, who may be reached at alexandra_lowe@nps.gov or 804-904-7443.

SUMMARY OF CLI REVISIONS, 2026

Three levels of effort have been developed for CLI Updates: A, B, and C. Level C is limited to a condition reassessment of the landscape; Level B includes C and is a targeted update of select data fields; Level A includes C and is a comprehensive update of all data fields. This 2026 update to the Chickahominy Bluff CLI has been conducted at a Level B effort. The following edits have been made:

- The management category for the landscape remains, “Must be Preserved and Maintained.”
- The areas and period of significance are Military, Engineering, and Historic Archeology (Non-Aboriginal) for 1862-1865. The areas and period align with the 2018 National Register documentation. The area of Politics/Government identified in the 2002 CLI has been deleted because it is not relevant to the site’s significance.
- The Chronology and Physical History chapter documents changes in the landscape since the original CLI was completed in 2002.
- Inventoried features in the Analysis and Evaluation chapter are consistent with the findings of the 2018 National Register. The viewing platform, identified as a noncontributing feature in the 2002 CLI, is no longer extant. The Archeological Sites section is revised to direct readers to the 2018 National Register documentation.
- The overall landscape condition was evaluated as “Fair” in 2002 and 2007, and “Good” in 2008. The proposed landscape condition evaluation for 2025 is “Fair.”
- Updates to existing condition photographs and the site map.

Concurrence Graphic Information:

Attachment File Path

AUG-01-2002 16:10

DEPT. HISTORIC RESOURCES

804 3672323 P.02/03



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Historic Resources

2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221

W. Tayloe Murphy, Jr.
Secretary of Natural Resources

Kathleen S. Kilpatrick
Director

Tel: (804) 367-2323
Fax: (804) 367-2301
TDD: (804) 367-2386
www.dhr.state.va.us

August 1, 2002

Ms. Cynthia MacLeod
Superintendent
National Park Service
Richmond National Battlefield Park
Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site
3215 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23223

Re: Chickahominy Bluff Cultural Landscape Inventory
Richmond National Battlefield Park
Henrico County, Virginia
DHR File Number 2002-0703

Dear Ms. MacLeod:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Richmond National Battlefield Park (the Park) Chickahominy Bluff Cultural Landscape Inventory. Overall, the DHR finds that the document provides a comprehensive inventory of the landscape features and structures at the Park. We offer the following comments with regards to the NPS' recommendations:

- The DHR concurs with the NPS that the Chickahominy Bluff Landscape is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the 7 Days Battle of 1862, Criterion B for association with Robert E. Lee, Criterion C for military engineering, and Criterion D for archaeological potential to yield important information.
- The DHR also concurs that the period of significance includes the Civil War era (1862-1865). However, previous CLI documents for the Park have included the Conservation Movement and the New Deal Era as part of the period of significance. Further discussion as to why these periods do not contribute to the Park's eligibility may be needed.

We concur that the following landscape features contribute to the eligibility of the Park:

- Chickahominy Bluff
- Swamp
- Battery I
- Battery II

Administrative Services
10 Courthouse Avenue
Petersburg, VA 23503
Tel: (804) 863-1685
Fax: (804) 863-6186

Petersburg Office
15-B Bollingbrook Street
Petersburg, VA 23503
Tel: (804) 863-1630
Fax: (804) 863-1627

Portsmouth Office
612 Court Street, 3rd Floor
Portsmouth, VA 23704
Tel: (757) 395-6709
Fax: (757) 395-6712

Roanoke Office
1630 Penmar Avenue, SE
Roanoke, VA 24013
Tel: (540) 857-7585
Fax: (540) 857-7586

Winchester Office
107 N. Kent Street, Suite 203
Winchester, VA 22601
Tel: (540) 722-3427
Fax: (540) 722-7535

SHPO concurrence letter, August 1, 2002 (2 pages).

Chickahominy Bluff
Richmond National Battlefield Park

AUG-01-2002 16:10

DEPT.HISTORIC RESOURCES

804 3672323 P.03/03

■ Confederate Earthworks

We further concur that the following landscape features do not contribute to the eligibility of the Park:

- Deciduous woodland
- Planted vegetation
- Access road
- Jeep trail
- Views and vistas

The DHR agrees with the NPS that further study should be conducted to establish the contributing status of the following landscape elements:

- Drainage swales
- Cherry/Cedar border
- Confederate earthworks (for eligibility under Criterion D)
- Brick debris

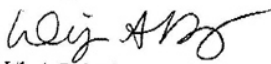
The DHR recommends that further justification be provided for the non-contributing status of those landscape features related to Mission '66/National Park Service stewardship. Those features include:

- Entry drive
- Parking area
- Primary trail
- Secondary trail
- Viewing platform

In addition, the DHR recommends that a phase I archaeological survey be conducted at the Park in order to determine the potential eligibility of the known archaeological resources and to locate any previously unidentified resources. The Park may want to consider conducting a metal detector survey as well.

Thank you again for consulting with us. If we can be of any further assistance, do not hesitate to contact me at (804) 367-2323 ext. 140 or lrichards@dhr.state.va.us.

Sincerely,



Lily A. Richards
Archaeologist and Historian, Office of Review and Compliance

C. Nancy Brown, NPS Philadelphia

TOTAL P.03

**Cultural Landscapes Inventory
Condition Reassessment
2007**

Richmond National Battlefield Park:
Chickahominy Bluff

Richmond National Battlefield Park concurs with the condition reassessment for the Chickahominy Bluff, including:

CONDITION ASSESSMENT: Fair – Chickahominy Bluff

Good: indicates the inventory unit shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbance and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. The inventory unit's cultural and natural values are as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

Fair: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the character defining elements, will cause the inventory unit to degrade to a poor condition.

Poor: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of major disturbance and rapid deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Immediate corrective action is required to protect and preserve the remaining historical and natural values

The condition reassessment for the Chickahominy Bluff is hereby approved and accepted.

	9.28.07
Superintendent, Richmond National Battlefield Park	Date

Condition reassessment form, September 28, 2007.

OCT-21-2008 17:23

RICHMOND NBP

804 771 8522 P.02

**Cultural Landscapes Inventory
Condition Reassessment
2009**

Richmond National Battlefield Park:
Chickahominy Bluff

Richmond National Battlefield Park concurs with the condition reassessment for the Chickahominy Bluff, including:

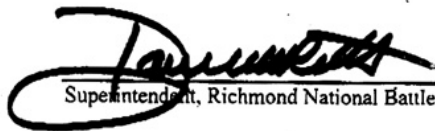
CONDITION ASSESSMENT: Good – Chickahominy Bluff

Good: indicates the inventory unit shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbance and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. The inventory unit's cultural and natural values are as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

Fair: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the character defining elements, will cause the inventory unit to degrade to a poor condition.

Poor: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of major disturbance and rapid deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Immediate corrective action is required to protect and preserve the remaining historical and natural values

The condition reassessment for the Chickahominy Bluff is hereby approved and accepted.



Superintendent, Richmond National Battlefield Park

10/21/2008
Date

Condition reassessment form, October 21, 2008.

Cultural Landscapes Inventory
Level II
Richmond National Battlefield Park: Chickahominy Bluff

Richmond National Battlefield Park concurs with the findings of the Level II inventory for Chickahominy Bluff including the following specific components:

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY: Must be Preserved and Maintained (Category A)

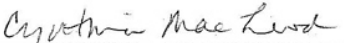
CONDITION ASSESSMENT: Fair

Good: indicates the inventory unit shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbance and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. The inventory unit's cultural and natural values are as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

Fair: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the character defining elements, will cause the inventory unit to degrade to a poor condition.

Poor: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of major disturbance and rapid deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Immediate corrective action is required to protect and preserve the remaining historical and natural values.

The Level II Cultural Landscapes Inventory for Chickahominy Bluff in Richmond National Battlefield Park is hereby approved and accepted.

	7.19.02
Superintendent, Richmond National Battlefield Park	Date

Park concurrence form, July 19, 2002.

**Cultural Landscapes Inventory
CLI Updates Certification Form
2026**

Richmond National Battlefield Park

Chickahominy Bluff, Drewry's Bluff, Fort Harrison, Glendale Battlefield,
Malvern Hill Battlefield, Parkers' Battery

Richmond National Battlefield Park certifies the CLI updates for the following sites,
including:

CONDITION ASSESSMENT: Fair – Chickahominy Bluff
 Poor – Drewry's Bluff
 Good – Fort Harrison
 Fair – Glendale Battlefield
 Good – Malvern Hill Battlefield
 Fair – Parkers' Battery

Good: indicates the inventory unit shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbance and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. The inventory unit's cultural and natural values are as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

Fair: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the character defining elements, will cause the inventory unit to degrade to a poor condition.

Poor: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of major disturbance and rapid deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Immediate corrective action is required to protect and preserve the remaining historical and natural values.

The CLI updates for the sites listed above at Richmond National Battlefield Park are hereby approved and accepted.

JENIFER EGGLESTON Digitally signed by JENIFER
EGGLESTON
Date: 2026.01.12 18:58:50 -05'00'

Superintendent, Richmond National Battlefield Park Date

Park concurrence form, January 12, 2026.

Revision:

Revised By	Type of Revision	Revision Date	Revision Narrative
Jeff Killion	Change in Condition	10/21/2008	Condition reassessment.
Jeff Killion	Change in Condition	09/28/2007	Condition reassessment.
Jeff Killion	CLI Update	01/12/2026	Three levels of effort have been developed for CLI Updates: A, B, and C. Level C is limited to a condition reassessment of the landscape; Level B includes C and is a targeted update of select data fields; Level A includes C and is a comprehensive update of all data fields. This 2026 update to the Chickahominy Bluff CLI has been conducted at a Level B effort.

Geographic Information

State and County:**State**

Virginia

County

Henrico County

Size (Acres): 39.2

Land Tract Number(s)

The Chickahominy Bluff Unit is comprised of one land tract: 03-106.

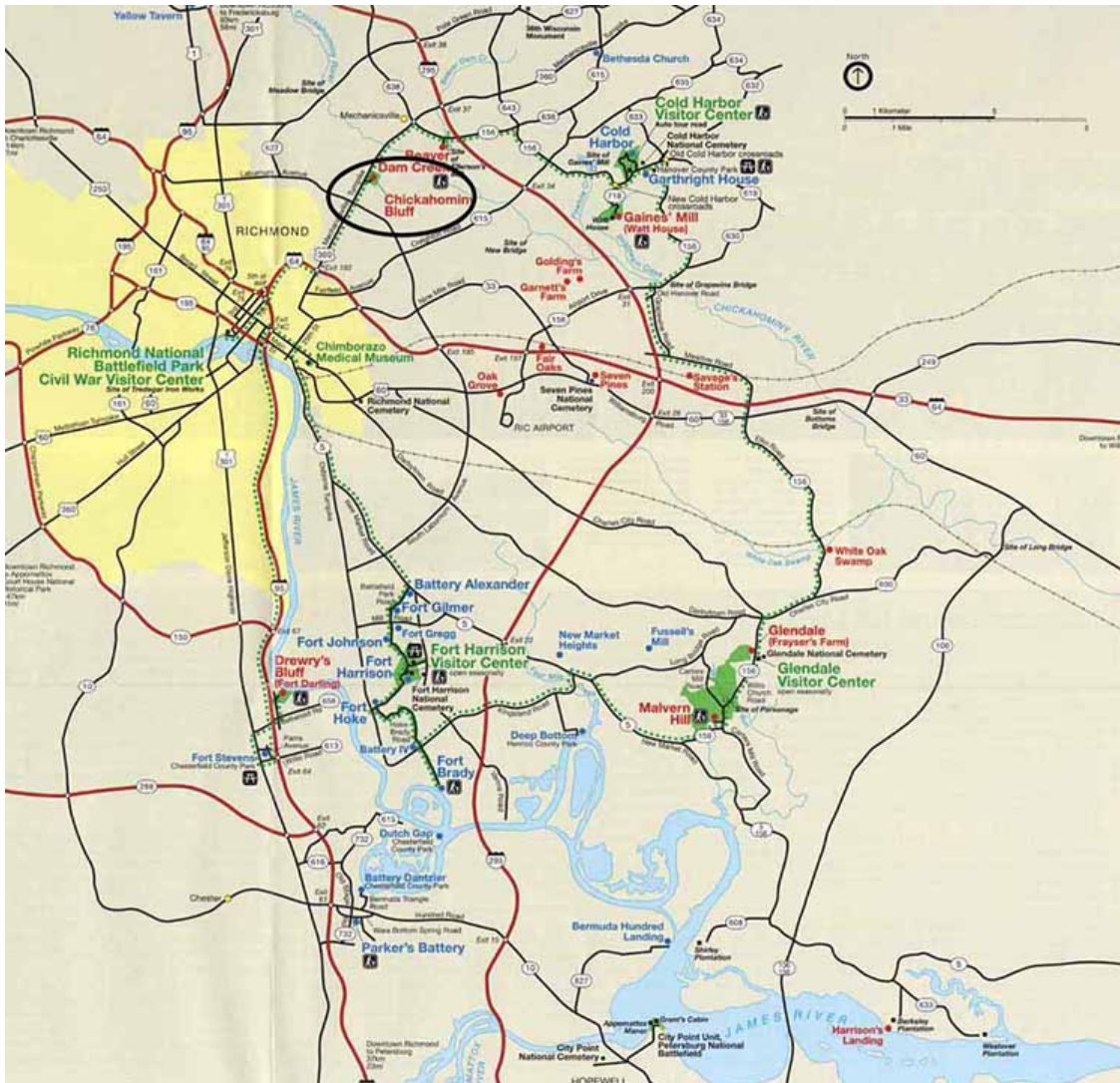
Boundary Description:

The CLI boundary for the Chickahominy Bluff unit of Richmond NBP is coterminous with the tract boundary. The northwestern corner of the unit is located east of US Route 360, and south of a high-tension power line and the Chickahominy River. The unit boundary runs 100 feet south of the power line for approximately 1250 feet. Then the boundary line turns 90 degrees and continues about 1260 feet to the southwest. At this point the boundary heads northwest for 860 feet until it turns southwest for 650 feet. The boundary then jogs 150 feet to the west where it turns to run approximately 1900 feet along Mechanicsville Turnpike to its originating point.

Boundary Coordinates

Source	Type of Point	Latitude	Longitude	Narrative
	Area	37.587858	-77.388028	
	Area	37.586049	-77.384463	
	Area	37.582828	-77.386546	
	Area	37.583365	-77.391363	

Location Map:



This map shows the location of all component landscapes in Richmond National Battlefield Park (NBP). Chickahominy Bluff, indicated with a circle, is located northeast of Richmond.

Regional Landscape Contexts:

Type of Context: Cultural

Description:

This context concerns the general human overlay on the physical form of the landscape. The Chickahominy Bluff unit is located in an area dominated by residential subdivisions. There is currently residential development located east, west and south of Chickahominy Bluff and more commercial and industrial development closer to Mechanicsville. A utility corridor is located directly north of the site.

Type of Context: Physiographic

Description:

This context concerns the large-scale physical forms and patterns of the landscape such as hill, plateau, ravine, drumlin, etc. Chickahominy Bluff is located in the relatively flat land of the Atlantic Coastal Plain province, but just east of the fall line of the Piedmont Province. The topography east of the fall line includes large, relatively level terraces or plateaus bounded by steep embankments associated with the margins of the waterways, many of which are edged by swamps and other wetlands over much of their floodplains. Chickahominy Bluff overlooks the Chickahominy River from the south, which is part of the James River drainage basin. (OCULUS 1996, Vol. I: 2-1)

Type of Context: Political

Description:

This context concerns the overlay imposed on the landscape through general land use, zoning, legal restrictions, transportation, utilities, population, and political jurisdiction (e.g., state, county, city, borough, or village). Chickahominy Bluff is located approximately one-mile southwest of Mechanicsville in Henrico County, Virginia. The park unit is located directly east of Mechanicsville Turnpike (US Route 360).

Management Information

General Management Information

Management Category: Must be Preserved and Maintained

Management Category Date: 07/19/2002

Management Category Explanatory Narrative:

As approved on July 19, 2002, Chickahominy Bluff meets the “Must be Preserved and Maintained” management category because the property is related to the park’s legislated significance and is nationally significant as defined by National Register of Historic Places criteria.

The 1936 enabling legislation for Richmond National Battlefield Park, amended in 1995, states, “In order to preserve the site of the 1862 Peninsula Campaign and the 1864-65 battle of Richmond, in the vicinity of Richmond, Virginia, as a national battlefield park for the benefit and inspiration of the people of the United States, there is hereby established, subject to existing rights, the Richmond National Battlefield Park.” In 2018 the property was identified as nationally significant under Criteria A, C, and D of the National Register of Historic Places, as part of the Richmond National Battlefield Park Historic District. (Act of March 2, 1936, Chapter 113; 49 Stat. 1155; NR 2018, Sec.8: 41-43)

Management Agreements:

Type of Agreement: None

Management Agreement Expiration Date:

Management Agreement Explanatory Narrative:

Legal Interests:

Type of Interest: Fee Simple

Narrative: The Chickahominy Bluff unit is comprised of one land tract (03-106) owned in fee simple by the NPS.

Located in managed wilderness?: Unknown

Adjacent Lands Information

Do Adjacent Lands Contribute? No

Adjacent Lands Narrative:

Adjacent lands are lands outside the cultural landscape boundary, including lands inside or outside the park. Chickahominy Bluff is now located in a suburban area of the greater Richmond metropolitan area. The lands east, south and west of the site are already, or zoned to be, suburban development. The land directly north of the site is a utility corridor that runs through the Chickahominy River valley. The proximity of the site to Mechanicsville Turnpike, a major artery, allows traffic noise to be very evident on the site. Fortunately, the increased vegetation of the site visually screens most of these incongruent land uses from view.

National Register Information

National Register of Historic Places

Documentation Status: Entered Documented

Documentation Narrative Description:

Chickahominy Bluff is part of Richmond National Battlefield Park (NBP), which encompasses a series of non-contiguous sites authorized on March 2, 1936, “for the purpose of protecting, managing, and interpreting the resources associated with the Civil War battles in and around the City of Richmond, Virginia,” and established on July 14, 1944. The Chickahominy Bluff site belonged to the original state park established in 1932 and was transferred to the National Park Service in 1960.

Richmond NBP was administratively listed without documentation in the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966, with the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act. Initial documentation of resources occurred on January 16, 1973 when the park was listed on the Virginia Landmark Register under the name “Richmond National Battlefield Park.” For this listing, a National Register form was prepared but was not approved by the Keeper of the National Register. The documentation accepted by Virginia indicated that the site was significant under Criterion A in the areas of politics and social/humanitarian, Criterion C in the area of architecture, and Criterion D for archeology (historic-aboriginal). The period of significance was identified as the nineteenth century, but no specific dates were given. The documentation itemized resources under four headings: earthworks (11 areas), monuments (approximately 80), Watt House, and Garthright House.

On February 18, 2000, the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) “The Civil War in Virginia, 1861-1865: Historic and Archeological Resources” was accepted by the Keeper. The MPDF identified property types and historic contexts with which to evaluate historic and archeological resources related to the Civil War. The six property types were battlefields, earthworks, campsites, military hospitals, military headquarters, and military prisons. Richmond NBP was identified under the battlefields, earthworks, military hospitals, and military headquarters property types under Criteria A, C, and D. The historic contexts were organized by the Civil War campaigns in Virginia, most of which were conducted along the principal transportation routes.

On August 1, 2002, the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with the findings of the Chickahominy Bluff CLI. The CLI found that the Chickahominy Bluff landscape was eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A, B, C, and D in the areas of Military (1862-1865), Engineering (1862-1865), and Archeology (1862-1865), with an overall period of significance of 1862-1865, beginning with the Seven Days Battles and ending when the war was over. Features that contributed to the historic period of significance were identified as Chickahominy Bluff, Battery I, Battery II, and the Swamp. The findings of the CLI were confirmed in a letter to the Virginia SHPO on October 5, 2009, as part of an update to the NPS Historic Structures Inventory (formerly List of Classified Structures).

On April 27, 2018, the Keeper accepted the first comprehensive park-wide National Register documentation for Richmond National Battlefield Park. According to the documentation, the park is primarily significant as the site of major Civil War battlefields and related properties associated with the Union’s attempts to take the Confederate capital city of Richmond during the Peninsula Campaign of 1862, the Overland Campaign of 1864, and the Richmond-Petersburg Campaign of 1864–1865. Significance for the 2,879.42-acre federally owned historic district was identified under criteria A, B, C, and D at the national level in the areas of Military, Ethnic Heritage-Black, Conservation, Other (Commemoration), Science, Engineering, Architecture, and Archeology-Historic (Non-Aboriginal). Robert E. Lee, George B. McClellan, and Ulysses S. Grant were identified as significant persons. The district’s contributing commemorative monuments were evaluated as meeting Criteria Consideration F (Commemorative Properties) because they possess significance from their age, design, and symbolic values. The period of significance for the district was listed as c.1720-1944, beginning with the construction of the Garthright

House and ending when the NPS officially accepted management of the park. For archeology, the period of significance was listed as c.1720-1864 for historic archeology. The documentation identified the entire site as a contributing resource, along with three other contributing features. An amendment to the National Register documentation is currently underway, which will address 635 acres of North Anna Battlefield (new park unit, acquired from ABT c. 2016/2017); a 50-acre tract at Cold Harbor, which includes Fort Fletcher; 380 acres at Malvern Hill; and 15 acres at Glendale.

According to research conducted for this CLI and the categories of National Register documentation outlined in the "CLI Professional Procedures Guide," the areas and periods of significance, and evaluations of historic resources for Chickahominy Bluff has been identified through consultations with the Virginia SHPO in 2002 and updated National Register documentation in 2018. Therefore, for purposes of the CLI, Chickahominy Bluff is considered "Entered-Documented."

Eligibility: Eligible - Keeper

Concurrence Eligibility Date: 04/27/2018

Concurrence Narrative:

Significance Level: National

Contributing: Contributing

Classification: Site

Statement of Significance for National Register of Historic Places:

Richmond National Battlefield Park:

The Richmond National Battlefield Park Historic District (the District) is significant at the national level under National Register of Historic Places Criteria A, B, C, and D. The District is primarily significant under Criterion A in the area of Military as the site of major Civil War battlefields and related properties associated with the Union's attempts to take the Confederate capital city of Richmond during the Peninsula Campaign of 1862, the Overland Campaign of 1864, and the Richmond-Petersburg Campaign of 1864–1865. The District has additional significance under Criterion A in the areas of Military and Ethnic Heritage: Black for the valiant role played by United States Colored Troops in the September 29–30, 1864, Battle of Chaffin's Farm/New Market Heights. Under Criterion B in the area of Military, the District is significant for its associations with Union Major General George B. McClellan and Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant and Confederate General Robert E. Lee, each of whom devised the strategy and tactics that led to and determined the outcome of the battles fought around Richmond in 1862 and 1864–1865. (NR 2018: Sec.8: 43)

The early twentieth-century efforts to commemorate and preserve the Richmond battlefields are related to national trends in the veneration and protection of Civil War battlefields and lend the District significance under Criterion A in the areas of Commemoration and Conservation. The Richmond Weather Station at Chimborazo, as an example of a purpose-built observation station constructed during the early twentieth century by the United States Weather Bureau, has significance under Criterion A in the area of Science and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The well-preserved earthworks within the District are highly important examples of Civil War field fortifications that are significant under Criterion C in the area of Engineering. The Garthright House, Watt House, and Shelton House are significant under Criterion C for their representative eighteenth- and nineteenth-century architecture. Under Criterion D, the District possesses significance in the area of Archeology: Historic, Non-Aboriginal for the data it has yielded, and

has the potential to yield, about the military and medical experiences of the Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War. The District also possesses significance for its demonstrated and potential ability to provide information about the evolution of the agrarian economy and landscape in antebellum Piedmont Virginia and the enslaved and free black people who lived on it. Lastly, the District's contributing commemorative monuments meet Criteria Consideration F because they possess significance engendered from their age, design, and symbolic values. (NR 2018: Sec.8: 43)

The period of significance for the District extends from ca. 1720, the earliest date associated with a standing historic resource within the District, to 1944, the end of the initial national park development period. The primary period of significance for the District corresponds to the years between the construction of the Richmond defensive fortifications in 1861 and the conclusion of the Richmond-Petersburg Campaign in 1865. The period of significance for commemorative activities associated with the District begins in 1866, almost immediately after the Civil War ended, and extends through 1944 to encompass the initial development of the battlefield lands as a national park under the NPS. After 1944, austerity measures throughout the National Park System curtailed development at the park for several decades, and the System-wide Mission 66 initiative of the 1950s and 1960s had little impact at Richmond. Additional land acquisition and resource rehabilitation has occurred only within the last two decades, i.e. the late-1990s to the present (2015). The period of significance for historic archeology under Criterion D is ca. 1725–1864. (NR 2018: Sec.8: 43)

Chickahominy Bluff:

Chickahominy Bluff, part of the Richmond National Battlefield Park Historic District, possesses national significance under Criterion A in the area of Military, Criterion B for Robert E. Lee, Criterion C in the area of Engineering, and Criterion D in the area of Archeology-Historic (Non-Aboriginal). The period of significance is 1862-1865, beginning with construction of the earthworks and ending when the Civil War concluded.

CRITERION A

Military:

Chickahominy Bluff is nationally significant under Criterion A in the area of Military for its association with the 1862 Seven Days Battles, where Robert E. Lee witnessed the beginning of the Battle of Beaver Dam Creek. George B. McClellan's army of more than 100,000 Union soldiers landed at Fort Monroe in spring of 1862, and fought its way up the peninsula. By mid-May the Army of the Potomac lay on the outskirts of Richmond, hoping to capture the capital of the Confederacy and perhaps end the war. If that strategy succeeded the nation might be reunified, but without abolition of slavery. Confederate General Robert E. Lee chose not to wait for the Federal army's next move. Instead, he seized the initiative, and on June 26 advanced across the Chickahominy River with nearly 45,000 soldiers. That action opened a week-long series of battles that resulted in the Union army retreating to the banks of the James River. With Richmond secure, Lee's army moved north, defeated Union forces at Cedar Mountain and Second Manassas (Bull Run), and then marched toward Maryland and the first invasion of the North. Military personnel manned Chickahominy Bluff throughout the remainder of the Civil War. (NR 2018, Sec.7: 14; Park website: <https://www.nps.gov/rich/>)

CRITERION B

Military:

Chickahominy Bluff is nationally significant under Criterion B for its association with the military career of General Robert E. Lee. General Lee used Chickahominy Bluff as his headquarters for the first day of the Seven Days conflict, which was Lee's first battle as the commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. The Union troops defended their position at Beaver Dam Creek during the fighting, but Lee's tactics and the perceived strength of his army caused McClellan to retreat toward White House Landing soon afterward. Lee would go on to use the knowledge he had gained during these first battles under his command to reorganize the Army of Northern Virginia and make it one of the most capable fighting forces in American history.

CRITERION C

Engineering:

Chickahominy Bluff is nationally significant under Criterion C in the area of Engineering for its remaining military fortifications. The permanent earthworks that ringed the city were part of the most extensive network of fortifications constructed during the Civil War. The sophisticated systems of trenches and forts constructed by the Confederate and Union armies represent the state to which field fortification engineering advanced during the Civil War and are generally regarded as the forerunners of the static trench warfare methods used in Europe in World War I. In addition to the permanent fortifications, numerous examples of temporary field fortifications are located on the battlefield units within the District. These field fortifications are representative of the military tactic of an active defense espoused most prominently by West Point engineering professor and military tactics author Dennis Hart Mahan (1802–1871). They were hastily established lines of defense scouted and selected by military engineers based on the natural advantages a position offered. The fortifications themselves were dug or otherwise constructed by the troops as they arrived at the select position. In places like Cold Harbor where the armies faced one another for relatively long periods of time, the field fortifications evolved into elaborate systems. (NR 2018, Sec.8: 97)

The Confederate Army constructed three defensive gun emplacements at Chickahominy Bluff, a 100-foot-high bluff overlooking the Chickahominy River north of Richmond. The three emplacements remain extant: Chickahominy Bluff – Battery No. I, Chickahominy Bluff – Battery No. II, and Chickahominy Bluff Earthworks. The earthworks connecting the batteries consisted of a parapet backed by a traverse that ran east along the edge of the bluff from the Mechanicsville Turnpike. A ditch also ran in front of the batteries and earthworks along the edge of the bluff. (NR 2018, Sec.7: 14 and Sec. 8: 101)

CRITERION D

Archeology – Historic (Non-Aboriginal):

Chickahominy Bluff is nationally significant under Criterion D in the area of Archeology – Historic (Non-Aboriginal) for its surviving earthworks and the potential to investigate the evolution of nineteenth-century military engineering, design techniques, and technology over the course of the war. The construction and elaboration of field fortifications is the most visible relic of the Civil War on the extant landscape, and perhaps one of the most important contributions that the war made to the field of military engineering. Championed by Confederate General James Longstreet and adopted by both armies as the war dragged on, these fortifications created a durable “defensive” military landscape. The earthworks at Chickahominy Bluff, as well as Totopotomoy Creek, Cold Harbor, Drewry’s Bluff, Fort Harrison, and Parker’s Battery, provide particularly valuable resources for examining those issues as they were variably constructed at the beginning and near the end of the war. In many cases, the earthworks were captured by the opposing army, which then reconfigured them to meet specific offensive or defensive needs. (NR 2018, Sec. 7: 109)

National Register Significance Criteria:

Significance Criterion A - Associated with events significant to broad patterns of our history

Significance Criterion B - Associated with lives of persons significant in our past

Significance Criterion C - Embodies distinctive construction, work of master, or high artistic values

Significance Criterion D - Has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history

Area of Significance:

Area of Significance Category: Military

Area of Significance Subcategory:

Explanatory Narrative:

Area of Significance Category: Engineering

Area of Significance Subcategory:

Explanatory Narrative:

Area of Significance Category: Archeology

Area of Significance Subcategory: Historic-Non-Aboriginal

Explanatory Narrative:

National Register Criteria Consideration:

National Register Periods of Significance (with Historic Context Themes):

Time Period: CE 1862 - CE 1865

Historic Context Theme	Subtheme	Facet	Other Facet
Shaping the Political Landscape	The Civil War	Battles In The North And South	
Expanding Science and Technology	Technology (Engineering and Invention)	Military (Fortifications, Weapons, And War Vehicles)	

NRIS Information:

NRIS Name: Richmond National Battlefield Park

NRIS ID: 66000836

Primary Certification Date: 04/27/2018

Other Certifications and Date: MM/dd/yyyy

State Register Documentation:

Identification Number: 043-0033

Name: Richmond National Battlefield Park

Listed Date: 01/16/1973

National Historic Landmarks:

National Historic Landmark? No

Theme:

Contributing:

NHL ID:

NHL URL:

Date:

Statement of Significance for National Historic Landmark:

World Heritage Site:

World Heritage Site? No

Category:

WHS ID:

WHS URL:

Date:

Is Resource within a designated National Natural Landscape: No

Chronology and Physical History

Chronology:

Year	Event	Major Event Narrative
CE 200 - 1697	Settled	Various Algonquin-speaking groups settle in Chickahominy Bluff area.
CE 1607 - 1775	Colonized	English colonize the region.
CE 1607 - 1775	Farmed/Harvested	English settlers farm tobacco for shipment to England.
CE 1775 - 1800	Built	Both canals and roads are built to improve shipment of goods from region.
CE 1800 - 1860	Developed	Region becomes rich in industrial development, such as flourmills, sawmills and sugar refineries.
CE 1862	Established	June 26, 1862: General Robert E. Lee establishes his headquarters to coordinate the start of the Confederate offensive for the Seven Days Battles at Chickahominy Bluff.
CE 1862	Built	Earthworks and trenches dug at Chickahominy Bluff to help defend Mechanicsville Turnpike.
CE 1863	Expanded	Earthworks and batteries at Chickahominy Bluff are improved and expanded as part of the Outer Line of Defense for Richmond.
CE 1864 - 1865	Inhabited	Military personnel man Chickahominy Bluff throughout the remainder of the Civil War. Men may have seen some action during the Kilpatrick Dahlgren Calvary raid in March 1864 or during Sheridan's Yellow Tavern raid in May 1864.
CE 1865	Abandoned	Batteries and earthworks at Chickahominy Bluff abandoned by military at the end of the Civil War.
CE 1880 - 1920	Developed	Increasing development pressure from expanding Richmond population threatens the preservation of earthworks at Chickahominy Bluff.
CE 1932	Land Transfer	State of Virginia accepts Richmond Battlefield Park's land and established the first state park of Virginia.
CE 1933	Established	Civilian Conservation Corps' (CCC) Colored Company 1375 is established at Richmond Battlefield Park.
CE 1936	Established	President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs enabling legislation for the National Park Service (NPS) to establish Richmond National Battlefield Park. The process to transfer state park lands to the NPS begins.
CE 1944	Land Transfer	July 14: NPS officially accepts management responsibility for Richmond National Battlefield Park.
CE 1958	Land Transfer	September 26, 1958: E. I. DuPont & Co. donates approximately 85 acres of Chickahominy Bluff's land to Eastern National Park and Monument Association.
CE 1960	Land Transfer	July 29, 1960: Eastern National Park and Monument Association exchanges approximately 49 acres for approximately 4 acres held by William F. Keck.
CE 1960	Land Transfer	Eastern National Park and Monument Association transfers 39.2 acres of the DuPont tract to Richmond National Battlefield Park.

Year	Event	Major Event Narrative
CE 1966	Altered	By 1966, Chickahominy Bluff is improved as part of the Mission 66 project, which includes an interpretive shelter built adjacent to a viewing platform.
CE 1985 - 1995	Removed	Interpretive shelter is removed from site.
CE 1932	Built	Split rail fence built to block visitor access to the secondary trail to the earthworks and the bottom of the bluff. Remote location and dense vegetation on the bluff enabled unlawful access to the resources and subsequent damage.
CE 1990 - 2000	Abandoned	The park closes the secondary walking trail through the woods.
CE 2005 - 2011	Naturalized	During this time, the park discontinues mowing the bluff.
CE 2008	Altered	Original bus/RV parking replaced with single pulloff. Roadway and parking lot rehabilitation includes widening roadway and improving drainage.
CE 2016	Removed	The viewing platform overlooking the river valley is removed. (PEPC #65152)
CE 2021	Built	The park repairs and replaces fencing at the site.

Physical History:

NATIVE AMERICAN SETTLEMENT/HABITATION, to 1607

The settlement and habitation of various Algonquin-speaking groups took place in the region during this period. While the 2002 CLI did not discover any documentation of actual Native American settlements at the Chickahominy Bluff unit, villages sprang up and remained near rivers to take advantage of their numerous resources, so it is conceivable that there were settlements in the region.

ENGLISH COLONIZATION, 1607–1775

With the settlement of Jamestown in 1607, Virginia entered the period of English colonization. English explorers discovered many natural resources available to ship back to England, and the land was very good for growing tobacco, a lucrative crop. Thus, the British settlers started to force the Native Americans from their land. The late 17th century saw typical rural settlement through the area with mills and trading posts located along the river.

AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND AFTERMATH, 1775–1800

After the American Revolution, the area around Richmond, Virginia, began to bustle with manufacturing establishments to supply the new nation. The Colonies were now able to manufacture supplies locally instead of sending the raw materials to England, who in return, forced the colonies to purchase their finished goods. The area's vast growth resulted from a number of factors, including its navigable waterways, rich soils, and access to ores and other natural resources. The aftermath of the Revolution also demonstrated a shift of some agricultural lands surrounding Richmond to produce grains instead of tobacco. Due to Chickahominy Bluff's location adjacent to the Chickahominy River and the fertile soil in the area, the CLI can infer that the agricultural lands near the Chickahominy Bluff site were producing grains at this time.

The roads of eastern Henrico County served to link the small rural communities with the wholesale markets for the agricultural produce. These markets were located primarily in Richmond, which contained grain mills and was a commercial transportation hub for the Mid-Atlantic and even Trans-Atlantic markets. Besides River Road, the fan-like network of roads emanating from Richmond toward southeastern Henrico County included Darbytown Road, New Market Road, Varina Road, and Osborne Turnpike.

This time period ushered in another important advancement: the canal system. A system of canals, the James River and Kanawha Canal, opened the James River to the west beyond the series of falls at the end of the piedmont. These canals enabled rural farms to export grains more expediently. While the Chickahominy Bluff area was north of Richmond, the canal system helped the exporting infrastructure to be established in Richmond. Thus, the farmers in the Chickahominy Bluff area would benefit as well.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, 1800–1860

With the completion of the canal system, Richmond became a premier industrial city. Tobacco began to dominate commercial activities as manufacturers set up warehouses and factories to store and process it. Coal was shipped via the canal to Richmond to be used locally and to be shipped to other markets. Several of the other industries established in Richmond were flourmills, cotton-clothing manufacturers, sawmills, sugar refineries, and many others. Some industries were more successful than others were, but in general Richmond's industry thrived during the first half of the 19th century.

THE CIVIL WAR, 1861–1865

With the start of the Civil War, Richmond gained additional significance when it became the capital of the Confederacy in 1861. Richmond's industrial strength was also a great contrast to the South's mostly agricultural economy. For these two reasons, control of Richmond became a key factor for both sides to win the war.

Confederate General Robert E. Lee took over the command of the Army of Northern Virginia on June 1, 1862, after the previous commander, General Joseph E. Johnston was wounded during the Battle of Seven Pines. Lee assessed that the city of Richmond was at great peril from the Army of the Potomac, which was under the command of Union General George B. McClellan. The first task Lee performed to remedy the situation was to send the troops out to strengthen the trench systems around Richmond for defense.

Lee assessed that the Federals were positioning their troops north of the Chickahominy River in order to protect the supply lines from White House Landing on the Pamunkey River. This position, along with a consistent food and arms supply, would allow the Federal army to make a prolonged investment at Richmond. Knowing that such investment would lead to the downfall of Richmond, Lee planned an offensive against the Federal army in hopes to threaten their supply line and drive them back to relieve the pressure on Richmond.

Lee first ordered General J.E.B. Stuart to gather intelligence about the Federal army's position, and from June 12-15 Stuart and 1,200 horsemen observed the Federal army and discovered the weakness of McClellan's right flank. Lee then held a council of war at the Dabbs House on June 23, 1862, with Generals James Longstreet, A. P. Hill, D. H. Hill, and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson to discuss his plan for an offensive against the Federal army. Lee presented a complex plan that would require close communication and precise timing of the Confederate troops. His plan was daring because it would require the majority of the Confederate army in the eastern theater to be part of the offensive, thus leaving Richmond relatively unprotected. If McClellan did not take the defensive and kept marching towards Richmond, it would be likely that Richmond would fall. Lee's plan for the offensive was to have Jackson's men march in from the Shenandoah Valley to support General D. H. Hill and General Lawrence Branch in turning the right flank of the Federal army. Then the rest of the Confederate troops would cross the Chickahominy and force the Federal army to retreat.

On June 26, 1862, Lee made his headquarters at Chickahominy Bluff because the height of the bluff afforded a good view over the Chickahominy valley towards Mechanicsville, and therefore an ideal location for him to coordinate the attack. However, lack of communication became a major hindrance for Lee's ability to coordinate the attack. Jackson's troops fell behind schedule and did not communicate their delays to Lee. In addition, Lee's vague orders left Jackson unsure of his exact role in the offensive.

After several hours delay, General A.P. Hill, who was anxious to prove himself in his first battle in high command, crossed the Chickahominy River and engaged the enemy. "At three o'clock he decided he must act. As he put it in his report, he determined to cross Meadow Bridge without reference to either Branch or Jackson – or Lee – rather than hazard the failure of the whole plan. He felt sure that by the time he was in position to confront the Yankees, Jackson would be on their flank." Hill's men scattered the Federal pickets at the bridge and started to march towards Mechanicsville. The Union troops immediately abandoned Mechanicsville and dropped back to their lines at Beaver Dam Creek. When Lee came into Mechanicsville and learned that the battle had been joined and Richmond was virtually unguarded, he knew that he had to continue without Jackson or Richmond could be lost. Therefore, Lee ordered the attack at Beaver Dam Creek, and the Seven Days Battles began (Figure 1). (Sears 1992: 201)

After the Seven Days Battles the earthworks at Chickahominy Bluff were expanded and manned throughout the rest of the war. Their proximity to Mechanicsville Turnpike (today also known as Mechanicsville Pike or US Route 360) and their location on the bluff made it an ideal location to defend the road that led straight into Richmond (Figures 2 and 3). The earthworks most likely were

manned during the nearby Kirkpatrick-Dahlgren calvary raid in March 1864 and were certainly manned during Sheridan's Yellow Tavern raid in May 1864. The Confederates would have abandoned Chickahominy Bluff in the spring of 1865 when Richmond was evacuated at the end of the war.

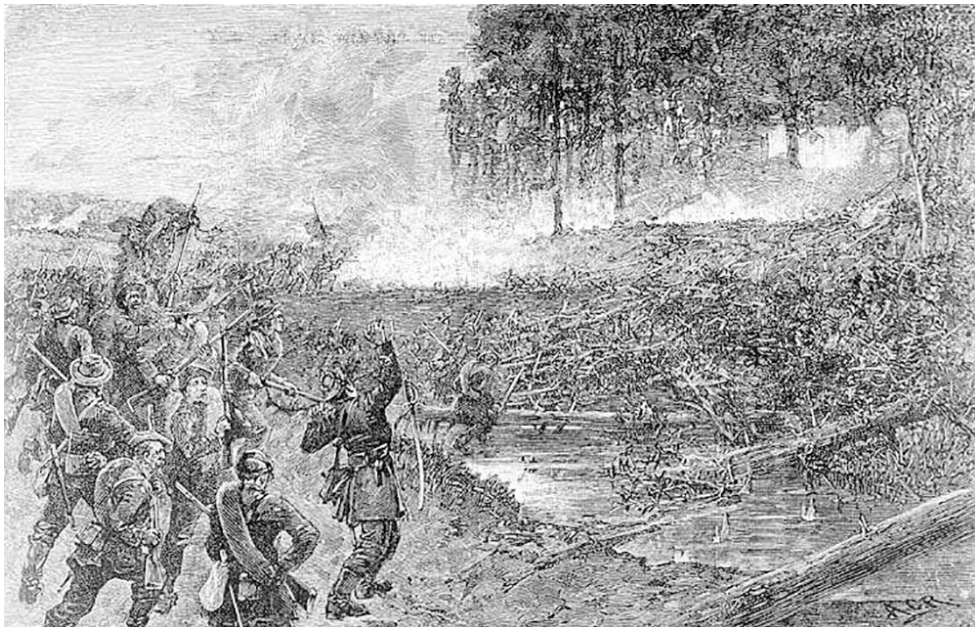


Figure 1. Charge of the Confederates at Beaver Dam Creek. Military offensive coordinated by General Lee at Chickahominy Bluff. (Richmond NBP archives, no date)

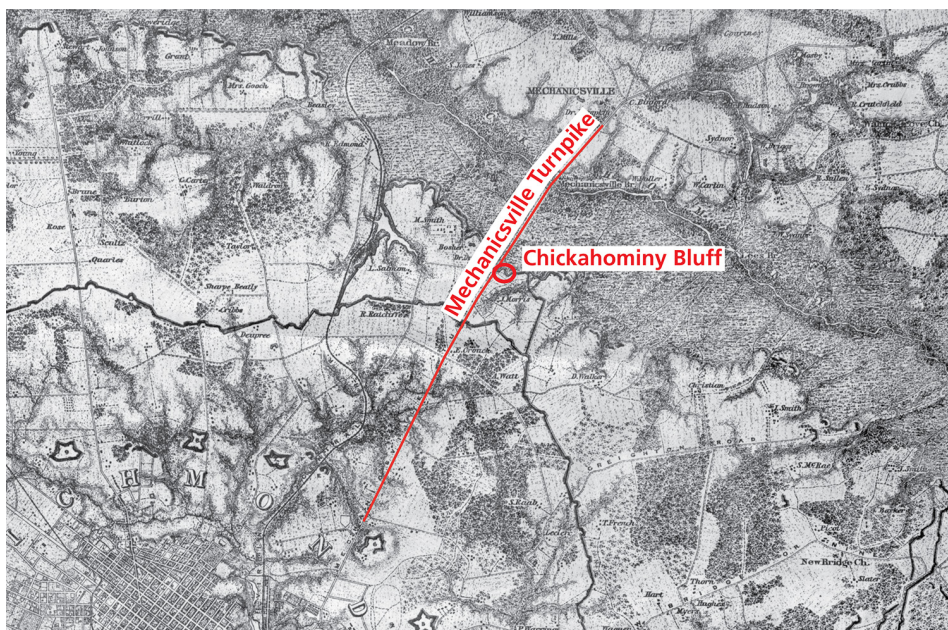


Figure 2. Historic map of Richmond showing Chickahominy Bluff's location to Mechanicsville Turnpike. (Michler 1867)



Figure 3. Detail of 1867 Michler map showing the defensive earthworks, batteries, and other nearby properties present during the war. (Michler 1867)

BATTLEFIELD COMMEMORATION, 1866–1944

While the commemoration movement began almost immediately after the Civil War's end, the Richmond battlefields did not benefit from congressional preservation efforts beyond the establishment of National Cemeteries such as Cold Harbor, Richmond, and Fort Harrison in 1866.

In 1914 the president of the C & O Railroad led one of the earliest attempts to memorialize the Richmond battlefields, proposing a road to link the significant battles of the Civil War fought near Richmond. Plans were postponed by the United States entering World War I, but the effort to commemorate the Civil War was resumed in 1925 with the placement of 59 "Freeman Markers" throughout the Richmond area. Douglas Southall Freeman, a Richmond journalist, began a group named The Battlefield Markers Association, whose mission was to memorialize important Civil War battles in the Richmond area through the placement of commemorative markers. While there is no Freeman Marker at Chickahominy Bluff, there are in several of the other units in Richmond NBP. In 1927 the Richmond Battlefield Parks Corporation (RBPC) was formed to quietly purchase crucial battlefield land to avoid inflating real estate prices. The group purchased approximately 550 acres of battlefield lands around Richmond and developed a road system, later known as State Route 156, linking the parcels.

Aware of their lack of resources to maintain and manage these lands, the RBPC successfully advocated for creation of a state park. Richmond Battlefield Park, therefore, became the first state park of Virginia on January 12, 1932, which was managed by the Virginia Conservation Commission. However, like the RBPC, an immediate problem for the commission was a lack of funds for the development or maintenance of the park. Thus, there was a push to transfer the park to the National Park Service (NPS), an effort that culminated on March 2, 1936, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the enabling legislation for Richmond National Battlefield Park. However, complexities in land transfers delayed official acceptance of the park to July 14, 1944.

Before the state park was officially transferred to the NPS, federal dollars were already being spent on its development through the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a work program associated with Roosevelt's New Deal. In 1933 a CCC camp was established in the immediate vicinity of Fort Harrison.

"There was a dichotomy in camp management. Actual supervision of the camp was assigned to the US Army. By contrast, management of the work projects was assigned to the host agency. Thus, the NPS found it necessary to hire employees at CCC sites that were located in National Parks and elsewhere. Since there was some impetus to absorb Richmond Battlefield State Park into the national system, the NPS hired among others, Floyd B. Taylor, a young man with no prior experience in land management work as a Junior Historian and assigned him to Richmond." (Baril n.d.: 1)

In July 1933, CCC Junior Colored Company 1375, a group comprised of about two hundred young African American men, was assigned to the state park.

The CCC primarily focused on improvements to the Fort Harrison area in the first couple of years, but by 1935 their scope expanded to other park areas. Now work was documented at Chickahominy Bluff, however, as the site was not part of the state or national park during this period. With the closure of the CCC camps in 1941 and the US entry into World War II in 1942, most work at the park came to a halt, and much of the work performed by the CCC became overgrown again.

Chickahominy Bluff:

The Chickahominy Bluff unit of has a different development history than most other units of Richmond NBP, as it was not part of the state park. In 1902 the explosives department of the E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Co. (DuPont) purchased part of the site and the remainder in 1912 to house an explosive storage magazine. Dupont made no other alterations to the site besides the small magazines.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE STEWARDSHIP, 1944–2025

The NPS assumed management of Richmond National Battlefield Park in 1944, but little work was accomplished until after World War II. The park was administered in conjunction with Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County National Military Park until 1951. After that, the park then had its own administrative staff.

The DuPont Company donated the tract of land on which Chickahominy Bluff is located to the NPS in 1953. The tract of land still contained Civil War breastworks, and the NPS felt that it would provide a good starting point to interpret the Seven-Day battles fought around the City of Richmond during 1862. The deed for approximately 85 acres was originally transferred to the Eastern National Park and Monument Association, who held ownership of the land until the parcel was transferred to the NPS. Eastern National exchanged approximately 41 acres of the DuPont tract for about 4 acres held by William F. Keck in 1960. It is thought that this land transfer provided a better entry point to the Chickahominy Bluff site from Mechanicsville Turnpike. Finally, Eastern National transferred the remaining 39.2 acres to Richmond NBP in 1960.

By the mid-1950s, increasing park visitation had taken a toll on parks nationwide, many of which had been properly maintained since the CCC development period. Recognizing this shortfall, NPS Director Conrad Wirth initiated the Mission 66 program, in which Congress agreed to allocate a billion dollars over a ten-year period so that parks across the country could be developed and improved in time for the fiftieth anniversary of the system in 1966. To meet the goals of Mission 66, Richmond NBP prepared a master plan to guide its improvements. As part of the master plan, the park sought to acquire a large building in Richmond, the Weather Bureau building Chimborazo, to serve as park headquarters and visitor center.

The development of Chickahominy Bluff for public access was part of the Mission 66 initiative (Figures 4 and 5). The current entry drive and parking lot were most likely built during this period, and photographs taken for the NPS Historic Structures Inventory indicate that there was an informational shelter adjacent to the pathway that led to the viewing platform overlooking the Chickahominy Valley (Figure 6). The Chickahominy Bluff unit also featured an interpretive trail that led the visitor through the park unit and around the earthworks. The park has since closed the trail through the earthworks to the public due to the proliferation of volunteer trails among the earthworks, and the shelter was removed circa 1985.

Landscape Changes Since 2002:

Changes to the landscape since the original CLI was completed in 2002 CLI include:

- Mowing of the bluff face is discontinued beginning in 2005.
- Roadway and parking lot rehabilitation in 2008 includes widening roadway, reconfiguring parking lot (original bus and RV parking is replaced with a single pull-off area), and improving drainage.
- The viewing platform overlooking the river valley is removed in 2016 (PEPC #65152).
- Fencing around the site is repaired and replaced as needed in 2021.



Figure 4. View of entry drive from Mechanicsville Pike. Sign on right indicates that improvements are of the Mission 66 Project. (Richmond NBP archives, 1963)



Figure 5. View of parking area looking back towards Mechanicsville Pike. (Richmond NBP archives, 1963)



Figure 6. Interpretive shelter and viewing platform in 1976. (HSI 006744, 1976)

Uses

Functions and Uses:

Major Category	Category	Use/Function	Historic	Current	Primary
Defense	Battle Site	Battle Site	Yes	No	Yes
Landscape	Leisure-Passive (Park)	Leisure-Passive (Park)	No	Yes	Yes
Defense	Fortification	Battery (Defense)	Yes	No	No
Education	Interpretive Landscape		No	Yes	No
Recreation/Culture	Outdoor Recreation		No	Yes	No

Public Access:

Public Access: Unrestricted

Public Access Narrative:

All units of Richmond NBP are closed from sunset to sunrise daily and all day on Thanksgiving Day, December 25, and January 1, but there are no gates, fences, or admission fees restricting public access to public roads, parking lots, and the trail system.

Associated Ethnographic Group

Ethnographic Study Status: No Survey Conducted

Ethnographic Narrative:

Authors of this CLI update consulted with David Goldstein, Ph.D., Tribal and Cultural Affairs Lead, NPS, DOI-Region 1. No ethnographic study of Chickahominy Bluff, nor the Richmond NBP, has been conducted. The park currently consults with following Federally Recognized tribes: Delaware Nation, Catawba, Chickahominy East, and Pamunkey.

Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

Analysis and Evaluation of Integrity Narrative Summary:

The historic integrity of Chickahominy Bluff is evaluated by comparing landscape characteristics and features present during the period of significance, 1862-1865, with the existing conditions as assessed in 2023-2025. Many landscape characteristics and features from the period of significance remain today. The Chickahominy Bluff unit of Richmond NBP is the location of General Robert E. Lee's headquarters for the beginning of the Seven Days' Battles. The height of the bluff provided Lee a good observation point to coordinate his attack in June 1862. Chickahominy Bluff was also an important military location because of its topography and its location to the Mechanicsville Turnpike (today also known as Mechanicsville Pike or US Route 360). The road was a direct route straight into Richmond. By building earthworks and batteries at the edge of the escarpment, the Confederate army had an ideal defensive location that overlooked the river valley and provided cover if they needed to attack against Federal forces making their way across the swampy river valley.

The 37-acre property contains a series of defensive earthworks and two batteries. Most of these earthworks are maintained under a thick forest canopy. The property also has an entry drive and parking area, a trail leading visitors to a viewing platform, and several interpretive waysides. The lower, level area of the unit is part of the Chickahominy River floodplain, and is characterized by a marshy swamp.

Since 1865, some landscape characteristics and features at Chickahominy Bluff have changed. While the tree cover is not the historic condition of the site, it does aid in protecting the earthworks. The features still located at Chickahominy Bluff that contribute the Civil War period of significance are the natural features of the bluff and the swamp, which made this location ideal as a defensive position. The topographic features of the Confederate earthworks and batteries built at the edge of the bluff to provide cover for the soldiers. These earthworks have shown erosion since the period of significance and are now located under forest cover, but otherwise have good integrity. The property also has an entry drive and parking area, a trail leading visitors to a viewing platform, and several interpretive waysides.

INTEGRITY

Overall, Chickahominy Bluff retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association. The National Register of Historic Places defines integrity as the ability of a property to convey its significance through physical resources. The National Register program identifies seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Retention of these qualities is necessary for a property to convey its significance; however, not all seven aspects must be present to retain integrity. The following evaluation is based on an 1862-1865 period of significance for Chickahominy Bluff.

Chickahominy Bluff retains sufficient characteristics and historic features to convey its significance. The landscape retains the integrity aspects of location, design, and association, clearly exhibiting important spatial relationships between the natural systems and earthworks necessary to convey the site's significance. The aspects of materials and workmanship are exhibited in the historic earthworks. The aspects of feeling and setting are diminished by continued development of adjacent lands, impacting historic views from the site.

Landscape Characteristics and Features:

The next section presents an analysis of landscape characteristics and their associated features and corresponding List of Classified Structures names and numbers, if applicable. It also includes an evaluation of whether the feature contributes to the property's National Register eligibility for the historic period, 1862-1865, contributes to the property's historic character, or if it is noncontributing, undetermined, or managed as a cultural resource.

Landscape Characteristic: Archeological Sites

Archeological sites are the locations of ruins, traces, or deposited artifacts in the landscape and are evidenced by the presence of either surface or subsurface features. Only sites identified in approved National Register documentation are identified in this report.

The Richmond NBP Historic District encompasses more than 2,800 acres spread across multiple units, all but two of which lie north and east of the James River. To date, only the Malvern Hill, Glendale, Gaines' Mill, and Totopotomoy Creek units have undergone systematic, unit-wide archeological review or survey. Smaller-scale, primarily compliance-related projects have been conducted at Drewry's Bluff, Totopotomoy Creek, Cold Harbor, Beaver Dam, and Fort Harrison, most of which resulted in the identification of low-density pre- and post-contact artifact scatters without clear temporal or cultural affiliations. (NR 2018, Sec.8: 107; Review comment, L. Lowe, 28 July 2025)

As stated in the 2018 National Register documentation, the earthworks at Chickahominy Bluff provide particularly valuable resources for examining those issues as they were variably constructed at the beginning and near the end of the war. Three contributing structures are assigned CRIS-AR numbers in the National Register: Chickahominy Bluff Earthworks (CRIS-AR RICH00002), Chickahominy Bluff–Battery No. I (CRIS-AR RICH00071), and Chickahominy Bluff–Battery No. II (CRIS-AR RICH00072). For additional information on archeological structures, see the 2018 National Register documentation. (NR 2018, Sec.7: 34)

Landscape Characteristic: Buildings and Structures

Historic and Existing Conditions:

Buildings are elements constructed primarily for sheltering any form of human activity in a landscape, while structures are elements constructed for functional purposes other than sheltering human activity. There is no documentation of any buildings or structures located at Chickahominy Bluff during the Civil War. There were most likely temporary structures placed on the site to assist with day-to-day life for the soldiers on the lines, but more research is necessary to determine these structures' existence and locations.

The CLI did uncover documentation that a structure had been located on the site during the Mission 66 improvements. A photograph taken for the List of Classified Structures in 1976 shows a shelter directly adjacent to the viewing platform that was most likely used for interpretation. The platform was built to help interpret Lee's position during the first day of the Seven Days' conflicts, and was laid directly on one of the earthworks. A set of wooden steps accessed an asphalt surface that lead to the bluff's edge where a wayside interpreted Lee's role while he was at this location. The platform was bound by wooden guardrails made of rail timbers. The shelter, platform, and steps were extant in 2002 but have since been removed.

Landscape Characteristic: Circulation

Historic and Existing Conditions:

Circulation refers to the spaces, features, and applied material finishes that constitute systems of movement in a landscape. Little is known about the internal circulation system of Chickahominy Bluff during the Civil War. The Confederate soldiers guarding the earthworks would most likely have internal circulation systems to assist movement along the bluff, but more research will be necessary to determine how extensive they might have been. The most important issue pertaining to circulation during the war was the bluff's proximity to Mechanicsville Turnpike, which was a primary road leading into Richmond. Therefore, the defense of this road was critical to Richmond's safety. By building defensive earthworks along the edge of the bluff, the Confederate soldiers had an ideal location to see over the Chickahominy Valley and attack aggressors trying to cross the river and the swampy land in the valley.

The circulation system at the Chickahominy Bluff unit today accommodates both vehicles and pedestrians (Figures 15 and 16). Vehicles access the site from Mechanicsville Turnpike via the entry drive. The pea gravel embedded asphalt drive heads east from Mechanicsville Turnpike, then turns north and forms a loop around a center island to the parking area. The parking area includes 15 regular parking spaces, 2 handicap spaces and 1 bus pullout space. There is a concrete curb bordering the parking area. Maintenance vehicles can access the north end of the site from a gated and locked gravel road that leads from Mechanicsville Turnpike at the bottom of the hill. An abandoned "jeep" trail heads south from the access road along the eastern border of the park.

Currently pedestrian visitors have limited access to the site. The accessible pedestrian circulation system consists of a single, 6-foot wide path, surfaced with loose pea gravel leading from the parking lot to the former viewing platform. A secondary trail leads off this gravel path into the woods. Public access to this trail, however, has been barred by the placement of a split rail fence. This trail once led past Battery I and the infantry line before splitting into a loop to head past Battery II, then continuing down the slope before circling back. A spur trail runs from the east end of the loop to meet up with the jeep trail at the bottom of the escarpment.

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Access Road	93621	Noncontributing			Location	15770	No
Entry Drive	93622	Noncontributing			Location	79993	No
Jeep Trail	93623	Noncontributing					No
Parking Area	93624	Noncontributing					No
Primary Trail	93625	Noncontributing			Location	15771	Yes
Secondary Trail	93626	Noncontributing					No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 15. Pea gravel trail leading north from parking area. (OCLP, 2023)



Figure 16. Entry drive and bus parking. (OCLP, 2023)

Landscape Characteristic: Land Use

Historic and Existing Conditions:

Land uses are the principal activities in a landscape that form, shape, and organize the landscape as a result of human interaction. During the Civil War Chickahominy Bluff was used for military purposes. The earthworks located there were part of the rings of defensive earthworks built to protect Richmond from Federal attack. The site was also used as Lee's headquarters for the first day of the Seven Days battles contested in June 1862. As Chickahominy Bluff overlooked the river valley and Mechanicsville, the site was ideal for Lee to see the maneuvers of his troops so that he could coordinate the offensive attack that he planned.

Today the Chickahominy Bluff unit is used as a park for passive recreation and commemoration. The unit is part of the series of Civil War sites owned by the NPS to interpret the role Richmond played during the Civil War and how it was defended.

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
	93627	Undetermined					No

Landscape Characteristic: Natural Systems and Features

Historic and Existing Conditions:

Natural systems and features are the natural aspects that have influenced the development and physical form of the landscape, and can include geology, geomorphology, hydrology, ecology, climate, and native vegetation. General Robert E. Lee's selection of Chickahominy Bluff as the location for his headquarters to oversee the first day of the Seven Days Battles was due to the site's natural systems and features. As a bluff overlooking the Chickahominy River, Lee was afforded an excellent view over the valley towards Mechanicsville and Beaver Dam Creek. Lee also enhanced the natural defensive position of the bluff with earthworks and batteries as part of the outer ring of defense of Richmond.

Today the natural systems of Chickahominy Bluff are the same as they were when Lee used this location as his headquarters. The park unit is located on a bluff overlooking the Chickahominy River valley. There are also several natural drainage systems and creeks on the site that lead towards the Chickahominy River (Figure 7). There is a wet, marshy area at the bottom of the bluff that runs adjacent to a creek.

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Chickahominy Bluff	93628	Contributing					No
Swamp	93630	Contributing					No
Drainage Swales	93629	Undetermined					No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 7. Drainage swale located on eastern edge of park unit. (Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation--hereafter OCLP--2023)

Landscape Characteristic: Small Scale Features

Historic and Existing Conditions:

Small-scale features are elements that provide detail and diversity for both functional needs and aesthetic concerns in the landscape. There is no documentation of any small-scale features located at Chickahominy Bluff during the Civil War. As noted in the building and structures section, the site was part of the outer ring of defenses where soldiers were stationed throughout the war, and there were most likely features placed on the site to assist with day-to-day life on the lines. Future research may uncover such features.

Today the small-scale features on the site are intended to direct and inform visitors and block access to the earthworks (Figures 18 and 19). There are two signs located at the entry on Mechanicsville Turnpike. The first is a large wooden NPS sign indicating the site as Chickahominy Bluff, and the second is a metal sign that is a State of Virginia historical marker interpreting the site as part of the outer fortifications of Richmond. This marker is outside of the NPS boundary, therefore it cannot be considered a contributing feature of the site. There are multiple signs to direct traffic throughout the site. There are also several interpretive waysides and a bulletin board to inform visitors. A metal gate at the entrance blocks entry when the unit is closed and a counter box documents visitation. There is a split rail fence blocking visitor access to the earthworks and the secondary trail and a mesh wire fence running along the southern property line.

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Bulletin Board	93632	Noncontributing					No
Counter Box	93633	Noncontributing					No
Directional Signage	93634	Noncontributing					No
Entry Gate	93635	Noncontributing					No
NPS Sign	93636	Noncontributing					No
Split Rail Fencing	209941	Noncontributing					No
Wire Mesh Fencing	93940	Noncontributing					No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 18. View north showing split rail fence. (OCLP, 2023)



Figure 19. NPS and State of Virginia signage located along Mechanicsburg Pike. (OCLP, 2023)

Landscape Characteristic: Spatial Organization

Historic and Existing Conditions:
Spatial organization is the three-dimensional organization of physical forms and visual associations in a landscape, including the articulation of ground, vertical, and overhead planes that define and create spaces. Little is known about the details of the Chickahominy Bluff’s spatial organization during the Civil War. It is known that General Robert E. Lee stood on the bluff overlooking the Chickahominy River and Mechanicsville and that his headquarters were adjacent to Mechanicsville Turnpike. Some of the earthworks would have been in place by this time, but they would have been in open fields rather than under forest cover.

The spatial organization at Chickahominy Bluff today is organized around its circulation system. Vehicles access the site by the entry drive and loop leading from Mechanicsville Turnpike to the parking area. There is a pedestrian pathway leading from the parking area to a former location of a viewing platform situated on part of the earthworks. The vegetation has been cleared immediately in front of the former viewing platform to open the view towards the Chickahominy Valley. The rest of the site is located under dense forest cover. A previous pedestrian trail that leads into the forest and around the earthworks has been blocked by a split rail fence and is no longer accessible to the public. The earthworks consist of long linear infantry lines that lead down the slopes of the bluff. There are also two batteries located to the east.

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
	94123	Undetermined					No

Landscape Characteristic: Topography

Historic and Existing Conditions:

Topography is the three-dimensional configuration of the landscape surface characterized by features (such as slope and articulation) and orientation (such as elevation and solar aspect). Like the site's natural features, the natural topography of Chickahominy Bluff was critical in its selection as a defense location during the Civil War. The height of the bluff gave the men standing guard at the earthworks a good view over the valley, and the steep topography of the bluff made a good barrier against attacking forces. The bluff's proximity to Mechanicsville Turnpike, which led directly to Richmond, also made it a very important place to build infantry fieldworks and batteries so that the Confederates could protect the road. General John B. Magruder ordered infantry fieldworks and two redoubts suitable for heavy guns placed near the pike.

Today much of the natural topographic features still exist on the Chickahominy Bluff site. The bluff overlooking the Chickahominy River still exists, although the extended view across the Chickahominy valley available during the Civil War is now blocked by dense vegetation and surrounded by urban/suburban development. The earthworks built by the Confederates are still located on the site, but they have been worn down by erosion. The features that remain are the linear infantry lines that run down the slopes of the bluff and two batteries built to protect heavy artillery (Figures 8, 9, and 10). The infantry line parapet's height varies from approximately 8 feet tall near the former viewing platform to 4-5-foot tall as it heads into the woods and down the slope towards Mechanicsville Turnpike. There are two batteries remaining at Chickahominy Bluff, as well.

Battery I, which is directly adjacent the former viewing platform, consists of two arms, approximately 35 feet long and 10 feet high extending to the southeast from the infantry line. The embrasure across the front of the battery is indicated by a 3-foot drop in the height of the front of the battery that is approximately 21 feet wide. Battery II is located further east along the infantry line on the west edge of the bluff. This battery is shaped very much like Battery I, except that it was protected by a traverse on the west side and an additional infantry earthwork to the north. There is a low area at the end of the earthwork adjacent to Battery II that might be a possible bombproof location. More research is necessary to verify the origin of this low area. The infantry works continue east of Battery II, then split to head down two sides of the bluff.

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Battery I	94124	Contributing	081620		Asset	496531	Yes
Battery II	94125	Contributing	081621		Asset	496555	Yes
Confederate Earthworks	94126	Contributing	006744		Location	15773	No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 8. Earthworks heading down bluff slope west of viewing platform. (OCLP, 2023)



Figure 9. View of Battery I, facing east. (OCLP, 2023)



Figure 10. View of Battery I, facing west. (OCLP, 2023)

Landscape Characteristic: Vegetation

Historic and Existing Conditions:

Vegetation includes deciduous and evergreen trees, shrubs, vines, groundcovers, and herbaceous plants and plant communities, whether indigenous or introduced in the landscape. The vegetation located at Chickahominy Bluff during the Civil War would have been mostly agricultural. According to OCULUS, "nineteenth-century maps of the region indicate that much of the upland area was under cultivation during the war...The escarpment slope appears to have been wooded during the Civil War...The fieldworks were most likely intended to function in an open setting...Confederate troops camped along the turnpike at the bluffs for several months, cutting down much of the existing tree cover to construct fieldworks and for fuel." (OCULUS 1996, Vol. II 5: 6-7)

As illustrated in the 2008 report, "Vegetation Classification and Mapping at Richmond National Battlefield Park," Chickahominy Bluff includes five classes of vegetation: Mesic Mixed Hardwood Forest, Loblolly Pine-Hardwood Forest, Non-Riverine Saturated Forest, Successional Shrub Swamp, and Successional Tuliptree Forest. The vegetation is broken into several distinct areas: open park setting and planted vegetation, deciduous/evergreen forest cover, swamp/river vegetation, and cleared meadow (Figures 11, 12, and 13). (Patterson 2008: 59)

The entry drive to the park unit leads to the parking area within an open, park setting of turf grass and several planted specimen trees. The specimen trees include two willow oaks (*Quercus phellos*), a southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), three American holly trees (*Ilex opaca*), and a flowering dogwood tree (*Cornus florida*). The entry clearing is bordered by dense vegetation, which includes many invasive *Ailanthus* (*Ailanthus altissima*). As well as native poison ivy (*Rhus radicans*), trumpet creeper (*Campsis radican*), and Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*). On closer inspection of the vegetation located along the edge of the entry clearing, the CLI team documented a series of cedar (*Juniperus* sp.) and cherry (*Prunus* sp.) trees within the tangle of invasive species that appear to be planted. More research will be necessary to determine when the trees were planted, but according to photographs taken during the Mission 66 improvements, it appears that there were mature trees planted in the approximate locations on the site by this time (See photographs in Physical History section, 1944-2025).

The interpretive trail and earthworks located at the top of the escarpment are located under a more open canopy of loblolly pines (*Pinus taeda*). The understory vegetation in this area consists of herbaceous ground cover that is mown to deter succession. Located directly in front of the former viewing platform is a meadow, cleared by occasional mowing to allow for a view toward the Chickahominy River. As the earthworks head down the slope of the escarpment, the density of trees thicken considerably and change to a majority of deciduous trees such as tulip poplars (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) and sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*). The thicker canopy deters the herbaceous understory, but the leaf litter from the trees provides protection for the earthworks (Figure 14).

The vegetation changes character as it reaches the level ground at the bottom of the escarpment. As would be typical in moist soil that is located near drainage creeks and swamps, the vegetation changes to birch (*Betula* sp.) and beech (*Fagus* sp.) trees, and ferns and grasses as the understory.

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Deciduous Woodland	94128	Noncontributing					No
Planted Vegetation	94129	Noncontributing			Asset	1443100	No
Cherry/Cedar Border	94127	Undetermined			Asset	1443100	No
Swamp Vegetation	94130	Undetermined					No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 11. Southern magnolia and holly trees planted in parking island (OCLP, 2023).



Figure 12. Cedar and cherry border covered with invasives. (OCLP, 2023)



Figure 13. View looking north at flowering dogwood with Loblolly pines in the background. (OCLP, 2023)



Figure 14. Typical vegetation and ground cover over earthworks in woods. (OCLP, 2023)

Landscape Characteristic: Views and Vistas

Historic and Existing Conditions:
A view is the expansive and/or panoramic prospect of a broad range of vision that may be naturally occurring or deliberately contrived. A vista is a controlled prospect of a discrete, linear range of vision, which is deliberately contrived. The view offered at Chickahominy Bluff was the primary reason that this location came into prominence during the Civil War. The bluff is located on the south side of the Chickahominy River and its height over the river valley provided an excellent view towards Mechanicsville. General Robert E. Lee used it as his headquarters to coordinate Confederate troop movements during the first day of the Seven Days' conflict.

Today, the dense vegetation located on and beyond the site limits the view of suburban development to the south. The vegetation has been cleared directly in front of the former viewing platform location, but the height of the trees located further down the slope blocks the view across the Chickahominy Valley towards Mechanicsville (Figure 17).

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
	94131	Undetermined					No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 17. Trees block the view of the Chickahominy River. (OCLP, 2023)

Condition

Assessment Interval (Years): 4

Next Assessment Due Date: 01/12/2030

Condition Assessment and Impacts

Condition Assessment: Fair

Assessment Date: 01/12/2026

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

The property is in "Fair" condition, due to continued vegetative growth at the site, especially in regard to mature trees on the earthworks. As published in the 2025 "CLI Professional Procedures Guide," the definition of "Fair" states: The property shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and that some degree of corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration on many of the landscape characteristics will cause the property to degrade to a poor condition. Preservation maintenance and/or use must be combined with corrective action to halt deterioration.

Condition Assessment: Good

Assessment Date: 09/21/2021

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

Provisional. The condition reassessment for this CLI has been delayed due to Covid-19 travel restrictions and staffing shortages. In the meantime, the most recent condition assessment will remain in place until it is reassessed as part of a comprehensive update of the entire CLI. Planning and scheduling this update will occur in FY 2022.

Condition Assessment: Good

Assessment Date: 10/21/2008

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

In Fiscal Year 2008, the park performed the exotic and tree removal, as well as earthwork preservation specified on the CLI to improve this landscape from "fair" to "good" condition. However, due to a clerical error, this change was not recorded in the database until FY 2009.

A "good" condition assessment indicates the inventory unit shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbance and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. The inventory unit's cultural and natural values are as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

Condition Assessment: Fair

Assessment Date: 09/28/2007

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

"Fair" condition indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the character defining elements, will cause the inventory unit to degrade to a poor condition.

The most significant issue at the site include the presence of vegetation/invasive plants. The earthworks and much of the site are covered with successional deciduous tree growth.

Condition Assessment: Fair

Assessment Date: 07/19/2002

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

Impacts

Type of Impact: Adjacent Lands

Other Impact:

External or Internal: External

Impact Narrative: Surrounding suburban development continues to pose a threat to the site's historic character.

Date Identified: 01/12/2026

Type of Impact: Erosion

Other Impact:

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: The remaining earthworks at Chickahominy Bluff are slowly eroding. While these do not currently show signs of rapid erosion, the accumulated effects of wind and rain will cause the gradual deterioration of the earthworks. More severe erosion is occurring at places in the stream

Date Identified: 01/12/2026

Type of Impact: Release To Succession

Other Impact:

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: The earthworks and much of the site are covered with successional deciduous tree growth. While the trees help maintain the earthworks by slowing erosion, they need to be monitored to assess tree health and stability to ensure visitor safety and prevent damage to the resource. Trees that are dying need to be removed manually before they topple naturally or get knocked down by wind, where the root structure of the tree can do considerable damage to the earthworks. The park has an Earthworks Management Plan that guides practices to preserve earthworks while showcasing key areas for visitors and minimizing maintenance costs. In some cases, hazard trees deep in the woods that can't be felled are left to fall naturally

Date Identified: 01/12/2026

Type of Impact: Vegetation/Invasive Plants

Other Impact:

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: There are some invasive species affecting the site. Specifically, the cherry and cedar trees lining the entrance area are particularly affected by invasive plant growth. NPS maintenance staff could spray the invasive vegetation and then a team of seasonal help could follow up and remove the dead vegetation, and mulch the exposed areas. The park already spends time treating invasives at this unit (has mostly been in the woods) and will continue this practice and treat the ailanthus that are visible from the road.

Date Identified: 07/29/2005

Treatment

Stabilization Measures

Treatment Documents

Treatment Type:	Rehabilitation
Treatment Completed:	Yes
Document Type:	General Management Plan
Document Date:	1996-06-07

Title:

IRMA Link:

Narrative:

The management objective outlined in the park’s 1996 General Management Plan (GMP) is, “to identify, evaluate, protect, restore, and preserve park cultural resources important to the understanding of the military actions during the 1862 Peninsula Campaign and the 1864 and 1865 battle actions that resulted in the final struggle for Richmond.” Regarding Chickahominy Bluff, the GMP recommended:

- Build a short trail from the parking area to a relocated overlook and wayside.
- Relocate overlook from the earthworks
- Remove the existing shelter
- Study the stream course for possible restoration, as well as the former configuration of the trail after mitigating the effects of earthmoving and runoff originating on adjoining properties.
- Perform selective tree removal and brush clearing to enhance visitor safety and discourage inappropriate use.

(GMP 1996: 36)

Chickahominy Bluff does not have a Cultural Landscape Report or Treatment Plan with in-depth information regarding landscape treatment philosophy, strategies, or tasks. The growing availability of digital geospatial data, including LIDAR point-cloud data and aerial photo data, has assisted in the documentation of the cultural landscape’s physical attributes in the past several years.

Additionally, Chickahominy Bluff is included in the park’s Earthworks Management Plan and Fire Management Plan. The plan, based on earthwork management guideline documents, plant ecology, and soil science, describes the park’s practices to preserve earthworks while showcasing key areas for visitors and minimizing maintenance costs. It outlines that full forest coverage is the best way to protect soil from erosion and to monitor for and remove hazard trees where applicable. (PEPC 115308; Review comment, K. Allen, 28 July 2025)

Approved Treatment Costs

Cost Narrative:

Bibliography and Supplemental Information

Bibliography:

Citation Author	Citation Title	Year of Publication	Citation Publisher	Citation Type	Citation Location	Citation Number
Willett, John T	A History of Richmond National Battlefield Park	1957	Richmond: Richmond National Battlefield Park			
Staff	Resource Management Plan, Richmond National Battlefield Park	1994	n/a			
Staff	General Management Plan, Environmental Impact Statement	1996	n/a			
Staff	Sketches on the Battlefields Around Richmond, Virginia	1937	n/a			
Sears, Stephen W.	To the Gates of Richmond, The Peninsula Campaign	1992	Houghton Mifflin Co. New York, NY			
Sams, Cheryl	Chickahominy Bluff, Cultural Landscapes Inventory, Richmond National Battlefield Park, National Park Service	2008	n/a			
Robertson, James I. Jr.	General A. P. Hill, The Story of a Confederate Warrior	1987	Random House, Inc. New York, NY.			
Richmond Times-Dispatch	Du Pont Donates 85-Acre Tract For Use by National Park Service	1958	Richmond Times-Dispatch			

Chickahominy Bluff
Richmond National Battlefield Park

Patterson, K.D.	Vegetation Classification and Mapping at Richmond National Battlefield Park, Virginia. Technical Report NPS/NER/NRTR—2008/128	2008	Philadelphia, PA: National Park Service			
Olausen, Stephen A., Laura J. Kline, Kristen Heitert, and Gretchen Pineo	National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Richmond National Battlefield Park	2018	Pawtucket, RI: Public Archeology Lab			
OCULUS et al.	Documenting Richmond's Civil War Battlefields	1996	n/a			
National Park Service	Final General Management Plan, Environmental Impact Statement, Richmond National Battlefield Park, Virginia	1996	n/a			
Iris Williams, Peter	Conserving Richmond's Battlefields	1990	n/a			
Gallagher, Gary W. Ed.	The Richmond Campaign of 1862, The Peninsula and the Seven Days, 2000	2000	University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC			
Baril, Peter E.	"They Found a Jungle and Made a Park" The Civilian Conservation Corps at Richmond National Battlefield Park, ND, PHSO Library.		n/a			

Chickahominy Bluff
Richmond National Battlefield Park

Allen, Kristen	Earthworks Management at Richmond National Battlefield Park	2017	US Department of the Interior, National Park Service			
----------------	---	------	---	--	--	--

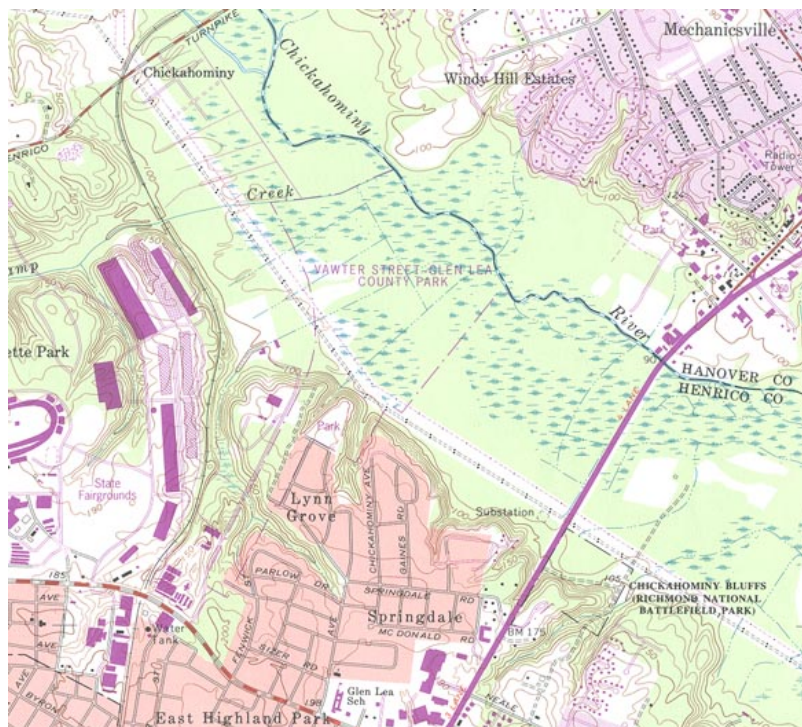
Supplemental Information:

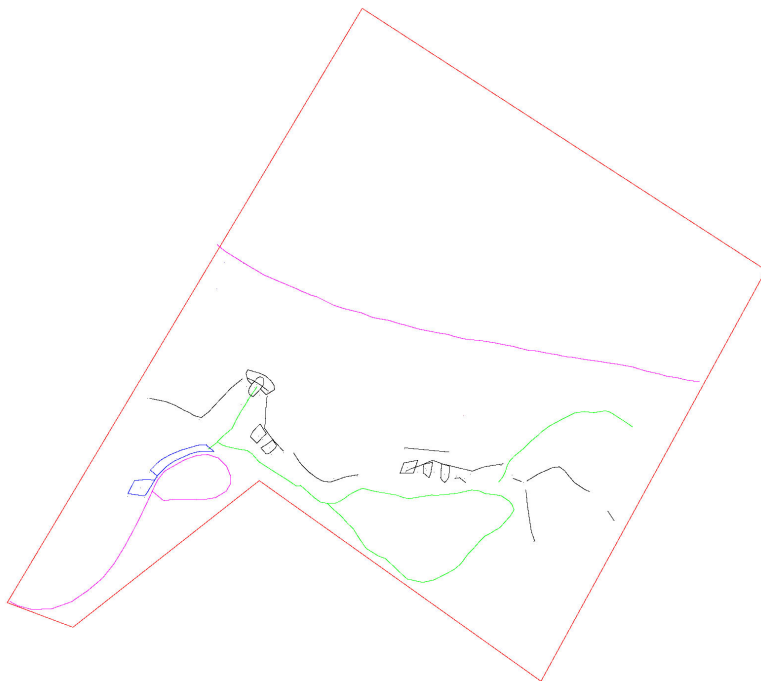
Supplemental Information Title: Chickahominy Bluff Earthworks GPS

Supplemental Information Narrative:

Global Positioning System locations for the circulation system and earthworks located at Chickahominy Bluff.
Source: Richard Easterbrook, Petersburg.

Supplemental Information File:





Supplemental Information:

Supplemental Information Title: Chickahominy Bluff USGS

Supplemental Information Narrative:

US Geologic Survey for Richmond, including Chickahominy Bluff unit of Richmond National Battlefield Park.

.

Supplemental Information:

Supplemental Information Title: City of Richmond GIS

Supplemental Information Narrative:

Geographic Information System produced by the City of Richmond. Used as base for existing conditions map.

.

Landscape Documents:

File Name	Date	Attachment Type
CL-FMSS_crosswalk- RICH_Chickahominy_CLIUpload.xlsx		Other Report

Source