



The Siege of Petersburg

A Views of the National Parks Virtual Experience



Petersburg National Battlefield preserves the cultural and natural resources that offer a window to past events in the American Civil War. With five railroad lines and key roads, Petersburg was an important supply center to the Confederate capital in Richmond. This city became the setting for the longest siege of the Civil War when Union General Ulysses S. Grant decided to cut off Confederate General Robert E. Lee's supply lines into Petersburg and Richmond.

The Siege of Petersburg explores both stories of the past and preservation issues of the present. Through the eyes of a war general, a plantation owner, a soldier, a surgeon, an engineer, or a civilian you can learn about military operations and the impacts on those involved. Through *Views*, you can experience the current challenges of protecting the natural resources associated with this historic landscape. A closer look at each unit within the park will provide the viewer an understanding of the war and its causes, impacts, and legacies to generations of Americans.

Features

This experience was designed to provide the user with a variety of teaching tools (video, interactive maps, virtual views, and primary source scenarios) to learn the why and how of protecting the park's natural and cultural resources.

Introduction

Watch a video that shows historic images of Petersburg in the Civil War and modern day images of the same landscape. The video provides an orientation to the battlefield units.

Grant's Headquarters at City Point

Once the home of a wealthy plantation owner, this site was the headquarters of General Grant and became one of the busiest seaports in the world during the siege. Explore Grant's cabin, read a diary of a surgeon and a plantation owner, and learn how to supply an army.

Eastern Front

During the 9 1/2 month siege, soldiers from both armies were entrenched in the fields around Petersburg. Experience life under fire by taking orders as a soldier, learn how to fire a cannon and dig a fortification, and examine life on the eastern front using an interactive map.

Petersburg was the sight of a nine-and-a-half month long siege during the Civil War that resulted in General Grant capturing Richmond and General Lee's army.

"The siege goes bravely on. The two armies keep digging away under each other's guns. The hardships to be endured are very great, but all have now schooled themselves down so that they are met as a matter of course."

— Color Sergeant D.G. Crotty
Third Michigan Volunteer
Infantry, Army of the Potomac

Visit *Views of the National Parks* online at:
www2.nature.nps.gov/synthesis/views

As part of the Petersburg virtual experience, you can assume the role of an infantry soldier on the front lines. Selecting actions provides a unique story about life in the trenches.

The Siege of Petersburg

Intro Map City Point **Eastern Front** Western Front Five Forks Poplar Grove Challenge

Profiles of Duty

Hearing the call to duty, citizens of both the North and South volunteered their services in support of their respective causes. Some fought as soldiers, while others worked on the home front, behind the lines, where they provided necessary medical care and support. During the nine-and-a-half month siege, Petersburg became a hub of activity, where tobacco warehouses became hospitals and farmland was transformed into battlegrounds marked by miles of trenches. Here, the duties of an infantry soldier, an artillery soldier, an engineer and a surgeon were critical to the success and survival of both armies.

Explore these profiles of duty along the Eastern Front using the links below.

Infantry Artillery Engineer Medical Care

“We do not pretend to say how long we will have a rest, nor do we care much, for we are so used to hardships that almost everything is done without a murmur.”

— Color Sergeant D.G. Crotty
Third Michigan Volunteer
Infantry, Army of the Potomac

Western Front

During the fall of 1864, the Union army moved west to capture major Confederate supply lines. Read a diary of a Military Railroad Engineer, study troop movements using interactive maps that highlight the military campaign from the Richmond and Petersburg fronts, and explore the challenges of preserving battlefields in rural areas targeted by industry.

Five Forks Battlefield

With the capture of Five Forks, the fall of Petersburg to Union forces was imminent. Compare letters and diaries of a Union and Confederate soldier, become a horse soldier and learn about the significance of cavalry to this battle.

Poplar Grove National Cemetery

This site became the final resting place for 6,178 Union soldiers who fought in the trenches and fields surrounding Petersburg. Use an interactive cemetery map to locate burial sites, read stories about some of the identified soldiers buried at Poplar Grove, take a virtual tour of the site and examine the challenges of preserving burial stones.

Teacher Resources

The Teacher Guide (in development) will provide teachers (both local and distant) with curriculum-based activities and lesson plans that can be used in the classroom and in the field. These teaching tools will include both history and science-based lessons on Civil War-related themes and battlefield preservation that can be printed or viewed on the

computer. The National Teaching Standards resource has information about which science and social studies standards can be met using this virtual experience.

Partners

The Natural Resource Information Division (NRID) teamed up with interpretive rangers at Petersburg National Battlefield and members of James Madison University’s College of Integrated Science and Technology to create this virtual experience.

Contact us

Petersburg National Battlefield
Robin Snyder - Education Specialist
robin_snyder@nps.gov
(804) 732 - 6094 x204

Views Project

Bruce Nash - Project Manager
bruce_nash@nps.gov
(303) 987 - 6697
Erika Matteo - Project Lead
erika_matteo@nps.gov
(303) 969 - 2684
Dave Krueger - Project Lead
david_krueger@nps.gov
(303) 969 - 2033

Visit Petersburg National Battlefield online:
www.nps.gov/pete