Petersburg National Battlefield

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

MAY - SEPTEMBER, 1864
Overland Campaign to Siege

REVERBERATIONS, OPENING ATTACKS
BATTLE OF THE CRATER, WESTERN FRONT

Visitor Guide to Petersburg's 1864 / 2014 Sesquicentennial Commemoration

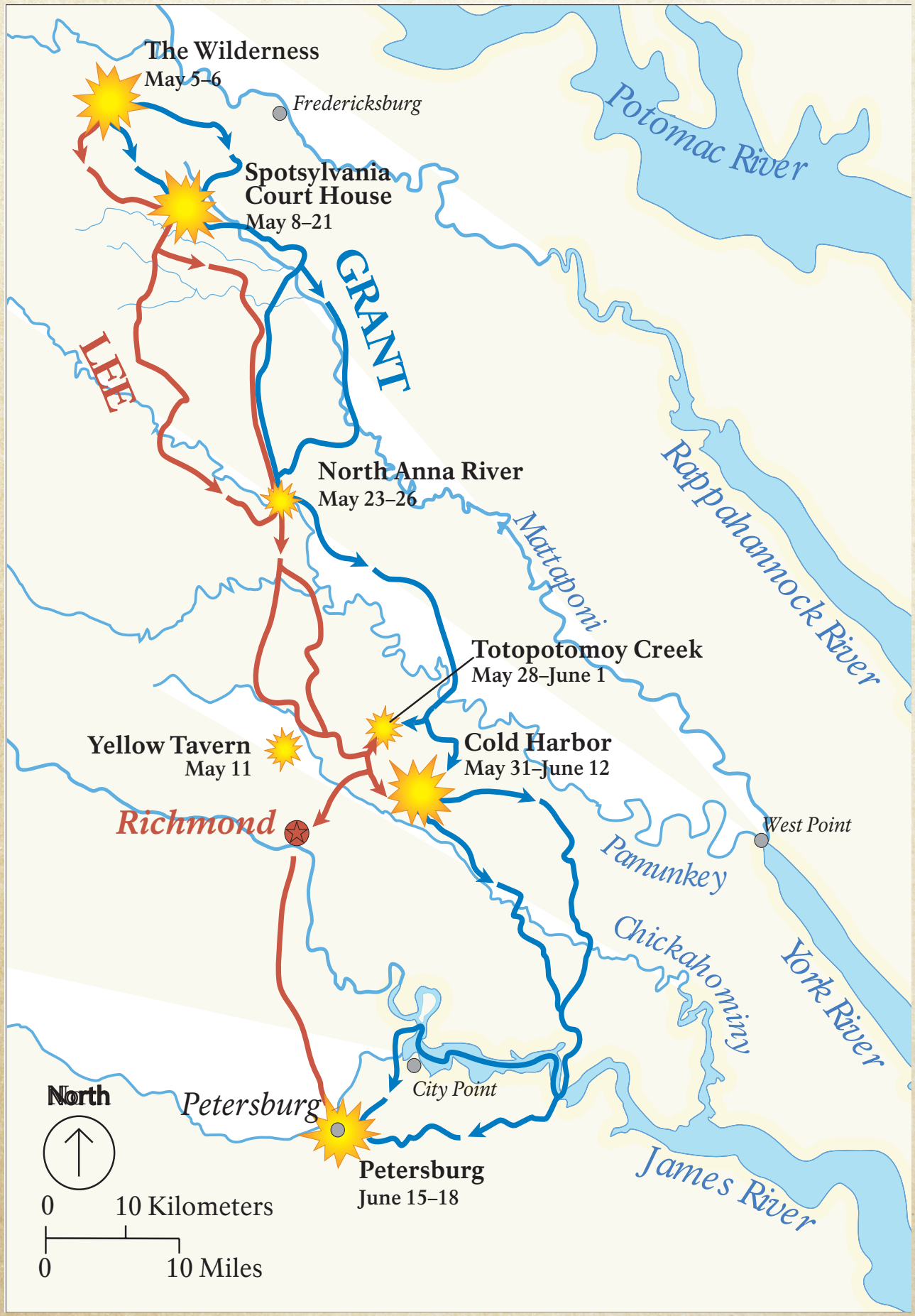
Prelude to Petersburg

By 1864, the war had changed dramatically in scope and purpose, but its outcome remained in doubt. Across the South, Union armies had made great territorial gains. In Virginia, however, General Robert E. Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia still stood defiant—the Confederacy's hopes for independence rode largely on the shoulders of Lee's army. Lee's success in 1862 and 1863 challenged the will of the Northern public to continue the war. He knew, the world knew, that more victories in 1864 would threaten the re-election of Republican President Lincoln and bring to power in the North a Democratic party more inclined toward a negotiated peace—and Southern independence.

Abraham Lincoln's antidote for Lee was a plain-looking soldier who had been unknown to the world four years before: the new General-in-Chief of all Union armies, Ulysses S. Grant. Practical, unpretentious, and direct, Grant promised to "hammer continuously" against Lee and his army until, he said, "there should be nothing left to him."

The hammering began in May 1864, as Union armies advanced along a 2,000-mile front. In Virginia, Grant—traveling with the Army of the Potomac—simply refused to accept the verdict of battle. Though confronted always and stopped often by Lee, Grant (unlike his predecessors) refused to retreat. Instead, the Union army maneuvered through Virginia, battering Lee's at the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, North Anna, Totopotomoy Creek, Cold Harbor, and then moved southward.

The grinding experience left soldiers on both sides exhausted and bewildered. In less than two months of fighting—from the Rapidan to Petersburg—nearly 85,000 men fell killed, wounded, or captured. In the early summer of 1864, the Civil War became a whirlwind, rushing southward through Virginia and the Confederacy. That divided nation and the world watched intently, for that spring and summer the final course of the war would be set.


The Wilderness
May 5–6
Fredericksburg
Spotsylvania
Court House
May 8–21
Potomac River
GRANT
LEE
North Anna River
May 23–26
Rappahannock River
Mattaponi
Totopotomoy Creek
May 28–June 1
Yellow Tavern
May 11
Cold Harbor
May 31–June 12
Richmond
West Point
Pamunkey
Chickahominy
York River
City Point
Petersburg
Petersburg
June 15–18
James River
North
0
10 Kilometers
0
10 Miles

Reverberations

Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park
Richmond National Battlefield Park
Petersburg National Battlefield

By telegraph and letter, by railroad and newspapers, word of Virginia's deadly spring reverberated across America. The loss of men in Virginia constituted a deep wound to communities near and far: Bangor in Maine, Natchez in Mississippi, Dearborn, Litchfield, Charleston, Wilmington. These places and hundreds more reckoned with the loss of men who would never come home—most of them buried today as unknowns on Virginia's fields.

Each death challenged the fortitude of a family, the fabric of a community, the will of a nation.

On Memorial Day weekend 2014, the National Park Service will join with a few representative communities across America to remember the struggle of those days of 1864. We will remember not just on the battlefields themselves, but in the communities that received the doleful news of that spring. The struggle of everyday Americans against loss, deprivation, and discouragement helped determine that fate of our Nation in 1864. Reverberations will once again reconnect American communities to the fields where their sons often gave all, and recognize a great and oft-forgotten struggle touched with both virtue and pain.

Locally:
Interred in cemeteries throughout Southside Virginia are the remains of soldiers who never made it home. Some soldiers remains were never even identified leaving their families with questions that would never be answered. These soldiers and their families will be the focus of Reverberations programs occurring at the cemeteries listed below.

Poplar Grove National Cemetery - 8:30 pm - 9:00 pm. Contact: Ranger Betsy Dinger at (804) 732-3531 ext. 208 for details.

Blandford Church - 8:30 pm - 9:00 pm. Program will provide brief histories of Blandford Church, the Siege of Petersburg, and Memorial Day. Selected accounts of sacrifices made by Confederate soldiers buried at the cemetery will be told. Candle lighting, with audience participation, honoring all Confederate soldiers buried at Blandford will follow. Contact: Ranger Tracy Chernault, (804) 732-3531 ext. 218.

City Point National Cemetery - 8:15 pm - 9:00 pm. This program will honor Union soldiers buried at City Point National Cemetery. Contact: RangerRandy Watkins, (804) 732-3531 ext. 205

Poplar Grove National Cemetery
Photo Courtesy Joanne Williams

Reverberations Communities

Petersburg National Battlefield

Sister Communities:

• Bangor, Maine was the home of many of the men of the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery. On June 18, 1864, approximately 900 members of the unit, acting as foot soldiers, attacked a section of the Confederate defense line located just east of Petersburg, Virginia. Within one hour, about three-fourths of the entire regiment was wiped out by Confederate cannon fire. On May 24, 2014, the Bangor community, including descendants of the men of the 1st Maine, will read the names of those killed or mortally wounded in the June 18 attack, as well as letters written by the soldiers and their families. Local historians will provide background of the 1st Maine itself, and a National Park ranger will provide details of the Petersburg attack.

• Wilmington, North Carolina was linked by two railroad lines to Petersburg, which enabled the Confederacy to move supplies during the war. Also, some regiments from the Confederate and Union armies fought around Petersburg in 1864 and were moved to the Wilmington region by late 1864 or early 1865.

• Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians and the Menominee Wisconsin Indian Tribe of Wisconsin were two of many Native American Indian Tribes which fought in the Civil War. More than 20,000 Native Americans fought in the war. These two tribes fought for the Union though other Native American Tribes fought for the Confederacy, another indication of the divisiveness of the Civil War. Native Americans served in the 2nd New York Heavy Artillery (an infantry unit), the First Michigan Sharpshooters, and the 7th, 36th, 37th and 38th Wisconsin Infantry Regiments at Petersburg.

• Camp Nelson, Nicholasville, Kentucky was the site of one of the largest Union recruiting and training centers for African-American soldiers or United Sates Colored Troops (USCT). From the opening action of the siege to being among the first troops to enter Richmond and Petersburg when the cities fell on April 3, 1865 their contribution was critical to the Union's success in this nearly ten-month long campaign. Reverberation activities to include presentations on the 114th & 116th USCTs who were raised at Camp Nelson and served at the siege, a commemorative ceremony for the USCTs' family members who died at Camp Nelson and a luminary at Camp Nelson National Cemetery recognizing the USCTs from Camp Nelson and from across the country who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Opening Assaults

Saturday, June 14 — Eastern Front Unit

8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

From Cold Harbor to Petersburg: Grant Moves South - Historians Robert E. L. Krick and James Blankenship lead this bus tour tracing the armies from Cold Harbor to the opening assaults on Petersburg. Reservations are needed and the cost is $40 per passenger. Please call (804) 335-8100 for reservations. Meet at the Cold Harbor Unit of Richmond National Battlefield Park in Mechanicsville to board bus.

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

War at the Doorstep: The Opening Assaults
Stop #1: Artillery and Infantry Demonstrations/Family Activity Tent
Stop #3: African-American Union soldiers at the Siege/Engineering at Petersburg
Stop #4, 5 & 7: Ranger presentations on the fighting from June 16-18, 1864 (except 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.)

10:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., 1:30 p.m. & 3:00 p.m.

Charge of the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery Unit
Stop #5: Ranger walk and living history program on the charge of the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery

Sunday, June 15 — Eastern Front Unit

10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

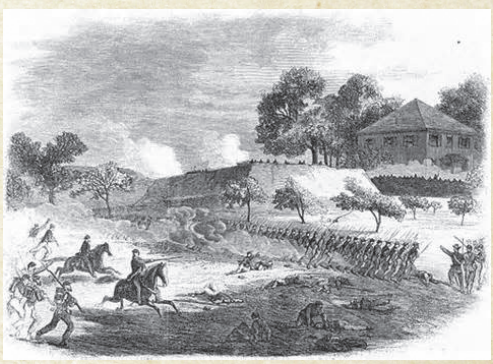
War at the Doorstep: The Opening Assaults
Stop #1: Artillery and Infantry Demonstrations/Family Activity Tent
Stop #3: African-American Union soldiers at the Siege/Engineering at Petersburg
Stop #4, 5 & 7: Ranger presentations on the fighting from June 16-18, 1864

10:30 a.m., 12:00 p.m., 1:30 p.m.

Charge of the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery Unit
Stop #5: Ranger walk and living history program on the charge of the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

From the Jaws of Victory
Stop #1: Ranger-led auto caravan tour of the fighting on June 15 and its impact on the siege



Wednesday, June 18 — Eastern Front Unit

4:30 p.m.

Charge of the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery Unit
Stop #5: Ranger-led real time tour which will retrace the attack made by the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery Unit

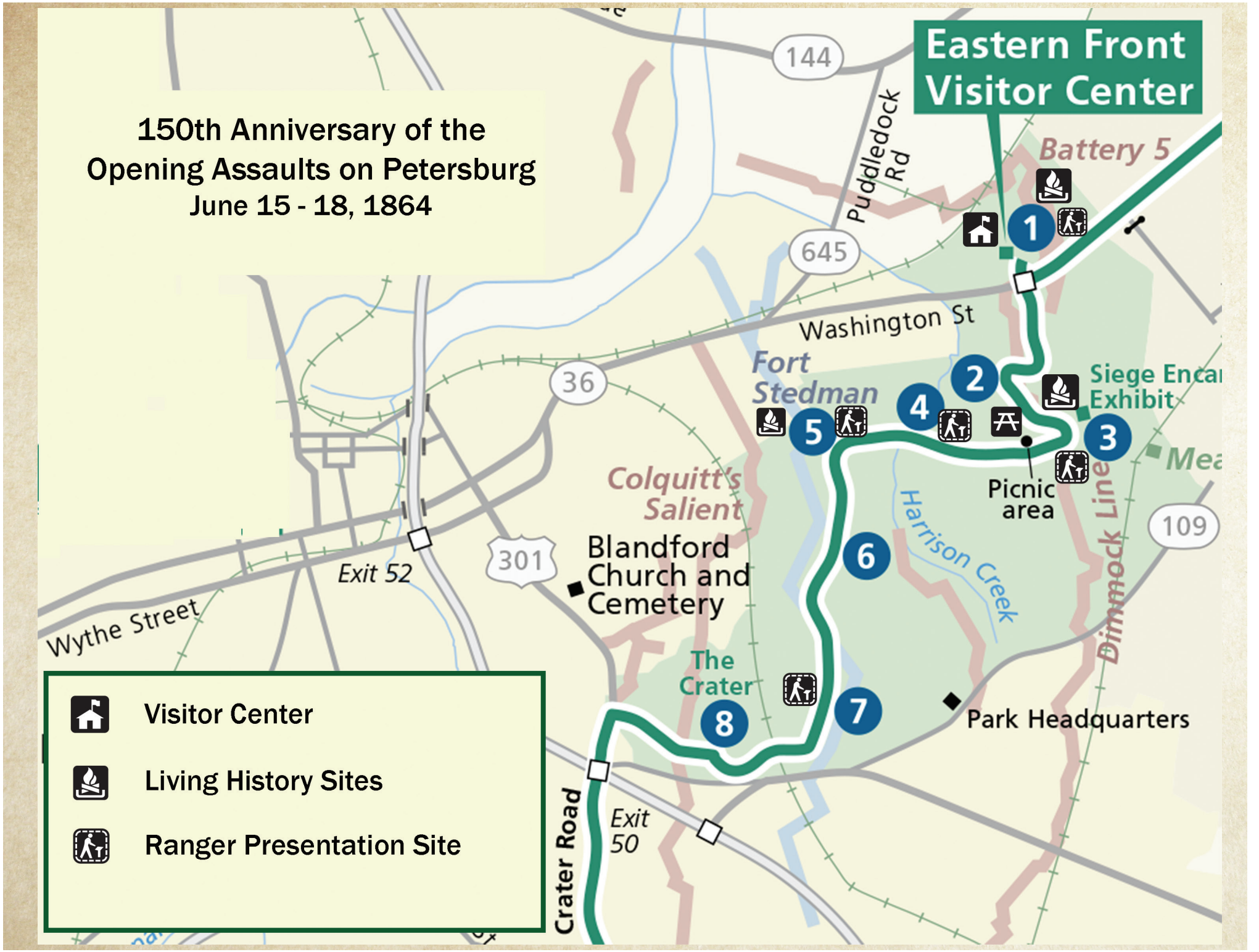
Voices from the Storm: The 1864 Overland Campaign

Sunday, June 29 — Historic Tredegar, Richmond

8:30 p.m.

Special outdoor multimedia program at the Tredegar Iron Works created from images, voices, and music of the people who lived 150 years ago to tell the story of the Overland Campaign.

** A partnership event cosponsored by the National Park Service and the American Civil War Museum*


150th Anniversary of the
Opening Assaults on Petersburg
June 15 - 18, 1864
Eastern Front
Visitor Center
Battery 5
Puddledock Rd
144
645
Washington St
36
Fort Stedman
Siege Encar
Exhibit
Picnic area
Colquitt's Salient
Harrison Creek
Dimmock Line
109
301
Blandford Church and Cemetery
Exit 52
Wythe Street
The Crater
Park Headquarters
Crater Road
Exit 50
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
Visitor Center
Living History Sites
Ranger Presentation Site

Battle of the Crater

Wednesday, July 30 — Eastern Front Unit

5:30 a.m. - 6:30 a.m.	Stop #8:	150th Anniversary of the Battle of the Crater Commemorative Program
7:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Stop #8:	Rangers will be stationed along the Crater Trail to describe the events of the battle.
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Stop #8:	Key Note Address
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Stop #8:	Rangers will be stationed along the Crater Trail to describe the events of the battle.
7:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Stop #8:	Artillery Demonstrations
	Stop #8:	United States Postal Service Unveiling of the new 150th Anniversary of the Battle of the Crater stamp.

Friday, August 1 - Panel Presentations — Petersburg

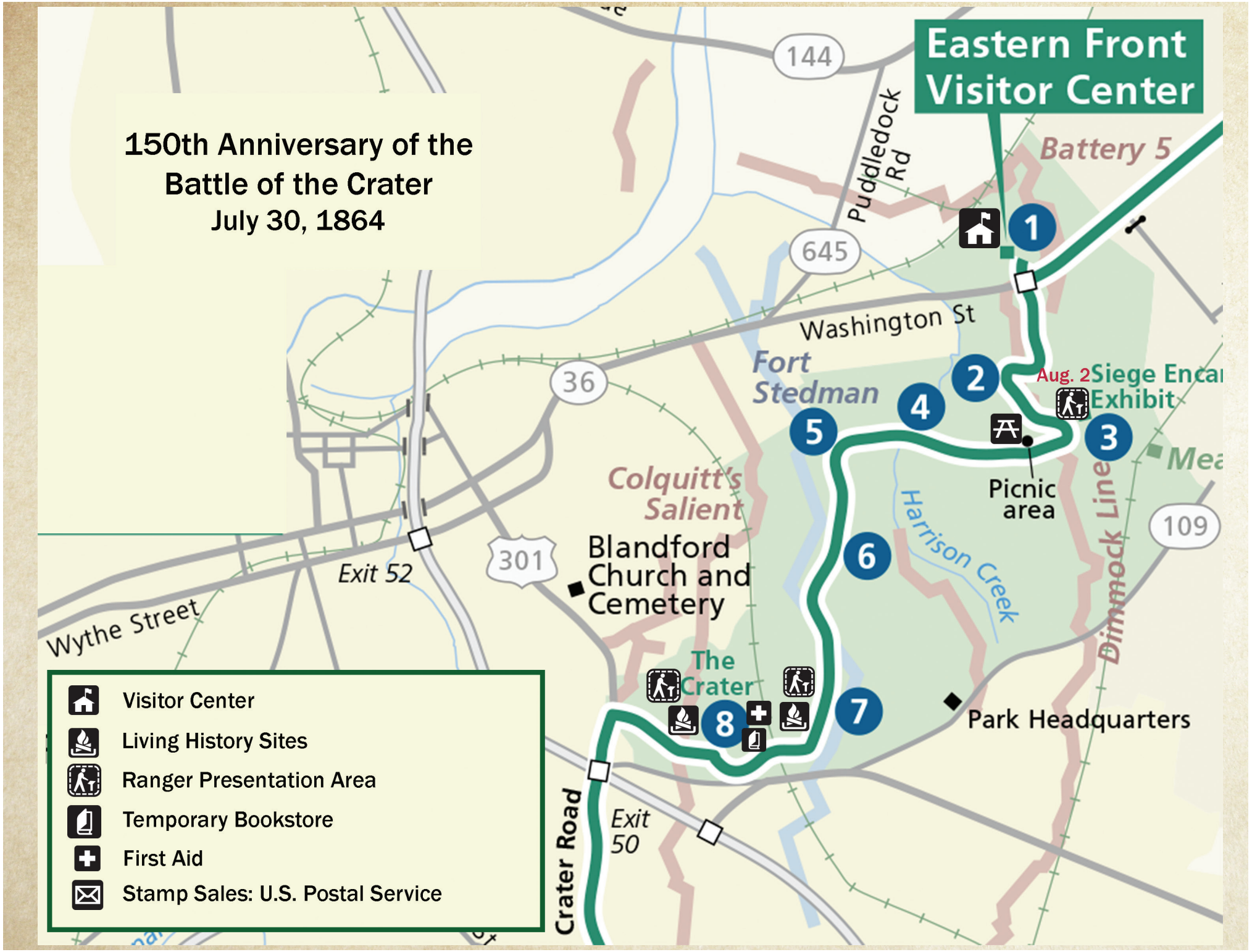
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Morning Panel Discussion - Gillfield Baptist Church, 209 Perry Street, Petersburg Three speaker panel will discuss the Battle of the Crater. A Question and Answer session will be included. Free
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Afternoon Panel Discussion - St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 10 Union Street, Petersburg Three speaker panel will discuss the impacts of the siege on those living in the city. Free
7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Historian Kevin Levin: Battle of the Crater & Civil War Memory. Location to be determined.

Saturday, August 2 - Living History Program — Eastern Front Unit

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Visitor Center:	Family Activity Tent Virginia History Mobile United States Postal Service - 150th Anniv. of the Battle of the Crater stamp sales
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Visitor Center:	Speaker Tent - Historian Ed Bearss, Book Signing and Talk
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Stop #3:	Siege Life
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Stop #7:	Union Artillery Demonstrations Union Command Civil War Archaeology at Fort Morton Civil War Medicine
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Stop #8:	Confederate Command Confederate Artillery Demonstrations
10:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m. & 3:00 p.m.	Stop #8:	Turning of the Tide Walking Tour & Living History Program

There will be no parking available in the Eastern Front Unit on August 2. Free shuttle service will transport visitors to and from the Farmer's Market located at 9 Old Street in Old Towne Petersburg.

Parking in Old Towne will be available by the intersection of Pike and Joseph Jenkins Roberts Streets (to the left of South Side Train Depot) and on Bollingbrook Street across from the Farmer's Bank/Petersburg Visitor Center (19 Bollingbrook Street).


150th Anniversary of the
Battle of the Crater
July 30, 1864
Eastern Front
Visitor Center
144
Puddledock Rd
Battery 5
645
Washington St
Fort
Stedman
36
Aug. 2Siege Encar
Exhibit
Picnic
area
Colquitt's
Salient
Harrison Creek
Dimmock Line
109
Blandford
Church and
Cemetery
301
Exit 52
Wythe Street
The
Crater
Park Headquarters
Crater Road
Exit
50
Visitor Center
Living History Sites
Ranger Presentation Area
Temporary Bookstore
First Aid
Stamp Sales: U.S. Postal Service

City Point, VA: Union Supply Base

Friday, August 8	General Grant's Headquarters Unit

7:00 p.m. — "The General-in-Chief: Grant Takes Command, 1864-1865", lecture by Dr. William Feis who authored "*Grant's Secret Service: The Intelligence War from Belmont to Appomattox*", will discuss General Grant's role in the Federal Armies in the last year of the war. Location to be determined.

Saturday, August 9	General Grant's Headquarters Unit

9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. — Living history programs and ranger guided tours including "Military Justice in the Union Army" at 10 a.m. & 2:00 p.m. and a 11:40 a.m. real time program on the waterfront which will describe the August 9, 1864 explosion at the Ordnance Wharf caused by a Confederate spy.

Sunday, August 10	General Grant's Headquarters Unit

9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. — Living history programs and ranger guided tours including "Military Justice in the Union Army" presented at 1:00 p.m.

Bus Tour: Grant's Third and Fourth Offensive: Battles of the Crater and Weldon Railroad

Sunday, August 17	Eastern & Western Front Unit

1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. — This bus tour coincides with the August 16 Richmond National Battlefield Park bus tour which focused on the First and Second Battles of Deep Bottom, VA. As part of General Grant's strategy, he coordinated attacks at Petersburg to take place soon after Lee's troops were attacked at Richmond. The Battles of the Crater and Weldon Railroad were two such offensives. Reservations are required for this tour and the cost is $25 per passenger. For more information, please call (804) 732-3531 ext. 200.

Battles of Weldon Railroad and Reams Station

Saturday & Sunday, August 23 & 24	Western Front Unit

Sat. 10:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Sun. 10:00 - 3:00 p.m. — Rangers and living historians at stops along these two battlefields will provide insight to Gen. Grant's Fourth Offensive of the siege and the impact it had on the struggle over Petersburg's fate.

Battle of Peeble's Farm

Saturday & Sunday, September 27 & 28	Western Front Unit

Sat. 10:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Sun. 10:00 - 2:00 p.m. — Rangers and living historians at stops along this battlefield will present tours and demonstrations on the Grant's Fifth offensive of the siege. Gen. Lee thwarts this effort at great cost to his hold on Petersburg and Richmond.

STAY SAFE AND HEALTHY...

Plan your visit thoughtfully to ensure that you are comfortable, safe, and well-prepared.

Weather:

Check weather forecasts before departing. Most of the events in this guide take place outdoors. Petersburg area weather in spring can vary and change. Summer days can be extremely warm. Please dress accordingly – wear loose clothing, bring a hat, and choose comfortable, sturdy shoes for walking on uneven battlefield terrain. Bring and wear sunscreen.

Water and Food:

Bottled water will not be sold in the park, but free water stations will be available for refilling personal water bottles and canteens. Please plan to bring a water bottle with you. Souvenir water bottles will also be available for purchase.

In most cases, food will not be available for purchase; however, visitors are welcome to bring lunches and snacks during these special events only. Please dispose of litter and recycling in the provided containers.

Roads and Trails:

Please stay on designated trails and note special event signs on roadways and trails.

Insects:

Petersburg's battlefields contain mosquitoes and a variety of ticks. Knowing tick safety protocols is very important for one's health. Some ticks are carriers of blood-borne pathogens, which can be transmitted when the tick is embedded in its host. Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Lyme Disease can be prevented with the right precautions. Check yourself, your children, and all clothing for ticks.

Facilities and Accessibility:

All events will provide accessible parking facilities. Most events and programs are fully accessible. However, several walking/hiking tours take place over long distances and uneven and rough terrain. They are indicated in the event descriptions. Outdoor events will offer portable restrooms that are accessible.

Pets:

Pets on leashes are allowed within Petersburg National Battlefield units as long as they remain outdoors. Service animals only are allowed inside park buildings.

Seating:

Some limited seating will be provided for programs and events that are stationary for a longer period of time. If you are planning to be in the park for an extended period of time, consider bringing a blanket or chair that is easy to transport. It is a good idea to plan carefully what to bring.

Petersburg National Battlefield was created in order to commemorate the campaign and siege and defense of Petersburg, Virginia, in 1864 and 1865. The park staff is committed to preserving and protecting the historical, cultural, and natural resources within the park in a manner that will provide interpretation, education, and enjoyment for the visitors. Park Visitor Centers, located in Petersburg, Hopewell, and Dinwiddie County are each open from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. For more information about events at Petersburg National Battlefield, you can become a fan on our Facebook page or follow us on Twitter @PetersburgNPS.

The four units of Petersburg National Battlefield:

Eastern Front Unit
5001 Siege Road
Petersburg, VA 23803

The Eastern Front is where the initial assaults on the City of Petersburg occurred on June 15 - 18, 1864. This site also includes the our largest Visitor Center, a four mile tour road which includes the Crater and Fort Stedman Battlefields, and 10 miles of nature trails.

General Grant's Headquarters Unit
1001 Pecan Avenue
Hopewell, VA 23860

The General Grant's Headquarters Unit at City Point not only served as the headquarters for the most powerful soldier in the Civil War, but was also the location of one of the largest military supply bases during the war. President Abraham Lincoln would spend two of the last three weeks of his life at City Point. Site includes a Visitor Center and outdoor exhibits.

Western Front Unit including
Poplar Grove National Cemetery
8005 Vaughan Road
Petersburg, VA

The Western Front Unit was the location where General Grant ordered Union offensives to occur. The main goal of these offensives was to take over supply lines needed by General Robert E. Lee's Confederate soldiers guarding Petersburg. This unit contains Poplar Grove National Cemetery, where over 6,000 Union soldiers are buried, and Union Fort Fisher which was the largest fort on the siege lines.

Five Forks Battlefield Unit
9840 Courthouse Road
Dinwiddie, VA

The Five Forks Battlefield Unit is where the last major battle of the Siege of Petersburg occurred. General Phillip Sheridan's Cavalry and General Gouvernor Warren's V Corps attacked General George Pickett's Confederates on April 1, 1865, in an effort to take over the last railroad supplying Petersburg; the South Side Railroad. This site includes a Visitor Center, a 5-stop driving tour, and 8 miles of nature trails.

Petersburg National Battlefield
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

5001 Siege Road
Petersburg, VA 23842
804-732-3531

www.nps.gov/pete