

# The Knapsack

Raleigh Civil War Round Table

*The same rain falls on both friend and foe.*

Mar. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
Our 253<sup>rd</sup> Issue



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## Mar. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022 Meeting Features Gary L. Dyson, B.S., Speaking on the Topic of His Book *The Ambush of the Isaac P. Smith: Family Ties and the Battle on the Stono, January 30, 1863*

Our upcoming meeting will be on Monday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022. As of this date, we will once again be meeting in person at the NC Museum of History in Raleigh. Please note that the Museum may require the wearing of a mask. For those unable to attend in person, a Zoom session will also be recorded simultaneously.

Raleigh CWRT President, Josie Walker, should have already emailed an invitation to you, including instructions and a link for joining online if you are unable to attend in person.

Please contact Josie at [RaleighCWRT@Yahoo.com](mailto:RaleighCWRT@Yahoo.com) if you did not receive an invitation.

March's meeting will feature a presentation by historian and author Gary L. Dyson, B.S., speaking on the subject of his self-published book [\*The Ambush of the Isaac P. Smith: Family Ties and the Battle on the Stono, January 30, 1863.\*](#)



Gary L. Dyson

Please join us at 6:30 p.m. for refreshments and book sales. The program starts at 7:00 p.m. EST. Masks may be required inside the museum. Please follow the website of the North Carolina Museum of History (<https://www.ncmuseumofhistory.org>) and other media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) for the most up-to-date information. This event will also be live-streamed on Zoom. A video recording will be made available on <http://www.raleighcwrt.org>, our Raleigh Civil War Round Table website, following the event.

Gary is a retired Environmental Specialist from the city of Gaithersburg, MD, and is a Marine Corps veteran, having served from 1982-86 as a surveyor. He has a B.S. in Natural Resources from Oregon State University but his lifelong passion has always been history. He has spent countless hours reading, researching and exploring battlefields – from the French and Indian War to World War II.

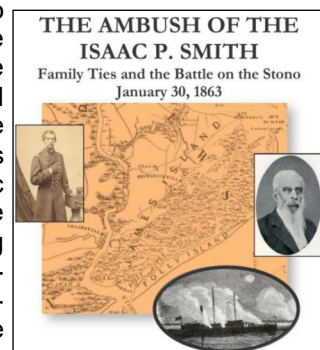
*The Knapsack*

Gary owns Dyson Genealogy and Historical Research and is Vice President of the Frederick County, MD, Civil War Round Table. In addition to [\*The Ambush of the Isaac P. Smith\*](#), he is also editor of [\*A Civil War Correspondent in New Orleans: The Journals and Reports of Albert Gaius Hills of the Boston Journal\*](#), published by McFarland; 1st edition (Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012). Gary has also authored church histories (2017, 2020) for Maryland United Methodist churches in Mount Airy and Frederick. Finally, he also recently authored [\*Confederate Row: The Confederate Dead Buried at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Frederick, Maryland, 1862-1907.\*](#) This book was self-published at Lulu.com (paperback, Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020); ISBN-10: 1716415411; ISBN-13: 978-1716415418.

Gary currently works as a genealogist and as a volunteer researcher of Civil War veterans for local cemeteries. He lives in Mount Airy, MD with his wife Emily, where they are finally "empty-nesters."

### Synopsis of [\*The Ambush of the Isaac P. Smith: Family Ties and the Battle on the Stono, January 30, 1863\*](#)

The U.S.S. Isaac P. Smith was a Union gunboat ambushed by Confederate shore batteries and captured on the Stono River near Charleston on January 30, 1863. Although the US Navy lost other ships due to battle and capture during the war, the Smith was the only one captured by Confederate field batteries and used against the Union. John Wyer Dicks (Executive Officer) and Frederic Calvin Hills (Paymaster) were officers on the Smith, meeting each other as shipmates, spending time as prisoners of war together, and immediately after the Civil War becoming related when Frederic married John's daughter Marianne. These two men were the ancestors of the author's wife.



This presentation tells the history of the Smith leading up to

its capture as well as provides an account of the crew's captivity and the lives of Dicks and Hills before and after the war. The book also includes some brief biographies of other combatants and civilians relevant to the battle, North and South. Official battle reports and eyewitness accounts were also used to describe the battle in detail.

*The Ambush of the Isaac P. Smith* is self-published through lulu.com; 1<sup>st</sup> edition [paperback], Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016; ISBN-10: 1365441164; ISBN-13: 978-1365441165. It is also available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), [barnesandnoble.com](https://www.barnesandnoble.com), and locally at [quailridgebooks.com](https://www.quailridgebooks.com).

## Twelve Notable Instances of Rail Transportation During the Civil War

A Twelve-Part Series by Bob Graesser, Editor

### Introduction

This is part ten of a twelve-part series (listed below) in which I examine in chronological order some of the most notable instances of how rail transportation played a critical role in the Civil War. Part ten starts with Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's initiation of his Overland Campaign on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1864, as he attempts to destroy Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. When that fails after repeated flanking maneuvers to Grant's left, he changes his goal to capturing the five rail lines radiating out from Petersburg, thus eliminating all of Lee's supply to Petersburg and Richmond. The focus of this article will be on the Siege of Petersburg and the role the U.S. Military Railroad played there.

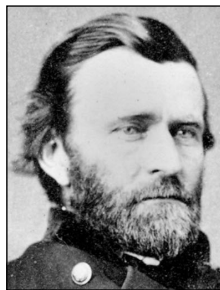
### Part 10 Sources

- [City Point: The Tool That Gave General Grant Victory](#) by Captain Robert O. Zinnen, Jr, *Quartermaster Professional Bulletin - Spring 1991*
- [Civil War City Point: 1864-1865 Period of Significance Landscape Documentation](#) by James Blankenship and Julia Steele; National Park Service, Petersburg National Battlefield, Virginia (July 2009)
- [Military Railroads during the Civil War](#) by Eva Swantner, Ph.D., in *The Military Engineer*, Vol. XXI,

No. 119 (1929)

- [Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant](#) by Ulysses S. Grant. New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1885
- [Petersburg's Railroads](#) by Tim Talbott (2018)
- [Report of James J. Moore, Chief Engineer and Gen'l Supt. Military Railroads of Virginia, July 1, 1865, Official Records, Series 3, vol. 5, 69-75](#), in *The Petersburg Project: United States Military Railroad -- City Point & Army Line*, Philip Shiman, Ph.D., David Lowe, M.A., Julia Steele, M.A.
- [The Civil War in the East: City Point and the Army Railroad](#) by Steve A. Hawks (2021)

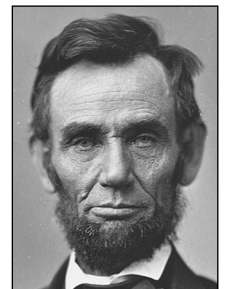
### Prologue



Lt. Gen.  
Ulysses S. Grant

Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, in orchestrating the recapture of Chattanooga, added to his string of victories in the Western Theater of the Civil War, including Ft. Henry, Ft. Donelson, Shiloh, and Vicksburg. As a well-earned reward, Union President Abraham Lincoln, on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1864, promoted Grant to Lt. General, making him the first to hold this high honor since George Washington. (Ed. note: In 1855, Congress had promoted Winfield Scott to Lt. General, but this was only a temporary (brevet) promotion. Grant's was permanent.)

Grant immediately traveled to Washington City, where he was formally commissioned by Lincoln during a Cabinet meeting on May 9<sup>th</sup>. Given free rein to devise an overall strategy for winning the war, Grant set a goal of destroying or capturing Confederate armies and restricting their ability to wage war. To do this, he came up with a five-fold plan, based on the idea of attacking simultaneously in a number of places to tie down the Confederate armies and prevent them from coming

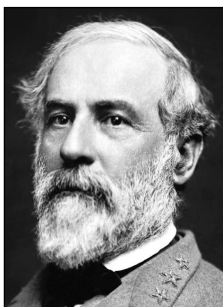


President  
Abraham Lincoln

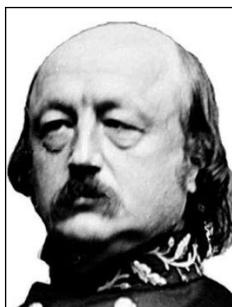
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- Part 1: Lincoln's Whistle-Stop Inaugural Journey from Springfield, IL to Washington City, Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>, 1861
- Part 2: Jefferson Davis's Inaugural Journey from His MS Plantation, Brierfield, to Montgomery, AL, Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>, 1861
- Part 3: Reinforcement Via Rail Enables the Confederates to Win the Battle of Bull Run, July 18<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>, 1861
- Part 4: The Great Locomotive Chase, a.k.a. Andrews' Raid, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1862
- Part 5: Greatest Troop Movement by Rail: Rebel Troops from Tupelo, MS to Chattanooga, TN, July 1862
- Part 6: Supplying the Union Troops by Rail During the Gettysburg Campaign, June 11<sup>th</sup>-July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1863
- Part 7: Longstreet's Reinforcement of Bragg by Rail to Win the Battle of Chickamauga, Sept. 9<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>, 1863
- Part 8: Union XI & XII Army Corps Reinforce and Rescue Rosecrans by Rail in Chattanooga, Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>-Oct. 6<sup>th</sup>, 1863
- Part 9: Supplying Sherman's Atlanta Campaign via Rail, May 1<sup>st</sup>-Sept. 5<sup>th</sup>, 1864
- Part 10: Supplying the Union Troops During the Siege of Petersburg, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1864-April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1865**
- Part 11: Supplying the Confederate Troops During the Appomattox Campaign, April 2<sup>nd</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, 1865
- Part 12: Lincoln's Whistle-Stop Funereal Journey from Washington City to Springfield, IL, April 21<sup>st</sup>-May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1865

to each other's assistance along interior lines:

- 1) Grant's main objective was defeating General Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia. Defeating Lee was important because his army had been the most successful of all Confederate armies and when that army ultimately fell, the Confederate war effort would be doomed.
- 2) The second of three Virginia campaigns would be led by Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler in an approach up the James River from the southeast to threaten both Richmond and Lee's army.
- 3) The third Virginia campaign would be led by Maj. Gen. Franz Sigel with the goal of capturing granaries and destroying rail lines in the Shenandoah Valley, known as the fertile breadbasket of the Confederacy.
- 4) A campaign would be led by Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks to capture Mobile, Alabama, the one remaining open Confederate port on the Gulf coast.
- 5) Finally, a major campaign would be led by Grant's trusted subordinate and friend, Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman, newly promoted to lead the three western Union armies. His goal was to destroy Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee and capture Atlanta in the heartland of the South.



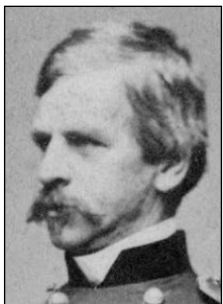
*General Robert E. Lee*



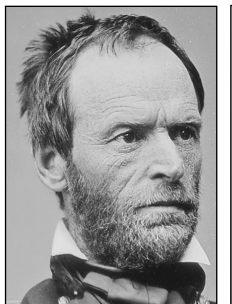
*Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler*



*Maj. Gen. Franz Sigel*



*Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks*



*Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman*



*General Joseph E. Johnson*

### The Overland Campaign

Grant established his HQ with Maj. Gen. George Meade's 115,000-man Army of the Potomac, and crossed Virginia's Rapidan River at dawn on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1864 to begin his Overland Campaign. Knowing that the Union had a virtually inexhaustible supply of men and matériel compared to that of the Confederacy, Grant thus began his war of attrition. His army would maintain the initiative and force constant combat upon Lee's shrinking army until its surrender in April 1865.

Grant's method of warfare represented an entirely new concept for the Union. For the previous three years the Union armies had retreated northward after each defeat or at the coming of winter. As this campaign progressed southward through the spring and early summer, it resulted in fierce fighting and extremely high casualties in one Virginia battle after another: the Wilderness, Spotsylvania Courthouse, North Anna, and Cold Harbor.

Grant, in one action too risky, literally had the Army of the Potomac decimated in a futile head-on attack against entrenched Confederates at Cold Harbor on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. The two opponents continued facing each other here in trench warfare until June 12<sup>th</sup>. At that point, it became clear to Grant that his Overland Campaign was over.

Although Grant's Army of the Potomac had suffered high losses during the campaign, approximately 52,000 casualties, or 41%, Lee had lost an even higher percentage of his men, approximately 33,000 casualties, or 46%, losses that could not be replaced. With the hard truth of Cold Harbor, and Lee's troops heavily entrenched, Grant realized that he had little remaining chance of destroying Lee's army. Therefore, Grant changed tactics from trying to destroy Lee's army to trying to capture Petersburg instead.

Petersburg, a prosperous city of 18,000, lay just 24 miles south of Richmond and was Richmond's major supply center. Being situated on the Appomattox River, which provided navigable access to the James River, Petersburg had a role as a major crossroads and junction for five railroads. Since Petersburg was the main supply base and an all-important rail depot for the entire region, and served as Richmond's lifeline, the taking of Petersburg by Union forces would make it impossible for Lee to continue defending Richmond, the Confederate capital. If Petersburg fell, Richmond would starve and thus force Lee's Army of Northern Virginia out into the open, where the vastly superior Union forces could destroy it.

Under cover of darkness on the night of June 12<sup>th</sup>, Grant again advanced by his left flank, marching to the James River. While Lee remained unaware of Grant's intentions, the Union army engineers constructed a pontoon bridge 2,100 feet long across the James River. This remarkable feat of engineering had produced a bridge strong enough to enable the Union troops, their horses, and their cannon to cross over to the south side on June 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>. What Lee had feared most of all, that Grant would force him into a siege of Richmond, was about to occur.

Lee had at first believed that Grant's main target was Richmond and devoted only minimal troops under Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard to the defense of Petersburg. However, for three days starting June 15<sup>th</sup>, Beauregard and his troops, though outnumbered, saved Petersburg from Union capture. He created a third defensive line along high ground closer to the city and occupied it on the morning of June 18<sup>th</sup>, welcoming timely reinforcements from Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. This ended Grant's hopes of taking Petersburg by storm and ensured a lengthy siege.

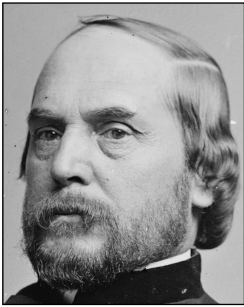


*General P.G.T. Beauregard*



When it came to logistics, Grant was a master, having been a U.S. Army regimental quartermaster in 1846 during the Mexican-American War. Throughout the Civil War, Grant had planned for and built supply depots to ensure that his operational plans did not fail because of inadequate supply support. Likewise, he believed that the Confederates would fail if he could sever their supply lines.

Thus it was that on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1864, Grant began siege operations against Petersburg, ordering his Chief Quartermaster General, Maj. Gen. Rufus Ingalls, to create a supply depot at City Point capable of supporting the forces participating in this siege.



Chief QM Gen., Maj. Gen. Rufus Ingalls

Six weeks earlier on May 5<sup>th</sup>, Major General Benjamin Butler's Army of the James had approached City Point by water. Col. Samuel Duncan's brigade of black troops had landed and captured City Point for the Union.

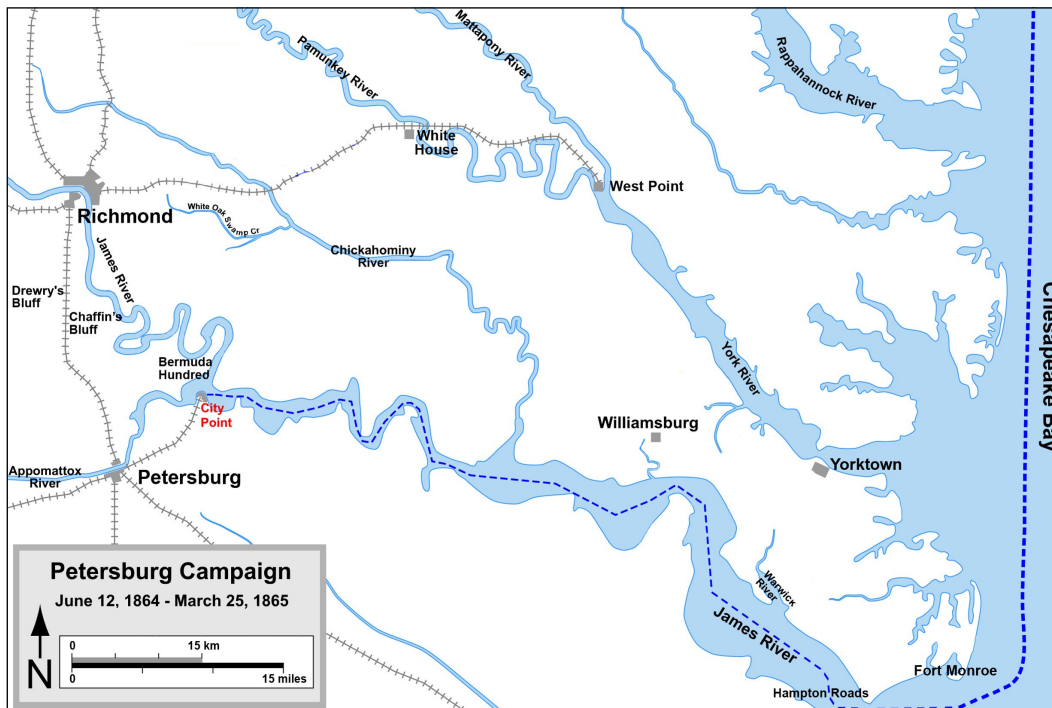
Ingalls had graduated with Grant in the Class of 1843 at West Point and exceeded Grant's expectations here by creating a supply depot previously unparalleled in military history, one capable of supporting an army of 500,000 soldiers, their equipment, and their 65,000 horses, mules, and cattle. City Point would be the largest port opera- →

tion in the Western Hemisphere, if not the world, at that time. On an average day, the Union army would come to have thirty days of food and twenty days of fodder stored in and around City Point. This amounted to 9,000,000 meals and 12,000 tons of hay and oats.

City Point was situated on a bluff overlooking where the James and Appomattox Rivers met. It lay ten miles north-east of Petersburg and twenty-three miles southeast of Richmond. Here Grant established his field headquarters. Living in tents during the summer and a two-room log cabin during the winter, Grant directed most of the last ten months of the war from City Point.

Under Ingalls' direction, the Union army literally created a city (now Hopewell, Virginia), where a declining ex-river port had once stood. (The Confederates had burned the wharves prior to the Union arrival.) Huge new wharves, a busy harbor, a repair shop, a giant government bakery capable of producing 100,000 loaves of bread per day, and an immense hospital equipped for 10,000 patients highlighted the operations. Best of all, City Point had water deep enough to handle large seagoing transports.

The creation of City Point with its impressive support capabilities in less than 30 days represents an achievement second to none in prior military history. City Point was a credit to all who built it and made it run so effectively. A vast amount of the praise, however, should go to Maj. Gen. Ingalls. His leadership provided constant guidance, support and a mixture of stringent control and autonomy for the different departments.



Map by Hal Jespersen, [www.posix.com/CW](http://www.posix.com/CW), CC BY 3.0

The map depicted above was originally created by Hal Jespersen to depict the 1862 Peninsula Campaign. Since it covers much the same area of Virginia, the author has repurposed his map to depict the location of City Point in relation to Petersburg and Richmond and to indicate the convoluted route that ocean-going and

tide-water vessels would have to take from Chesapeake Bay to their destination at City Point via the James River. All references specific to the 1862 Peninsula Campaign have been removed. City Point has been added to the map and the destination of the route of incoming vessels was changed from Fort Monroe to City Point.

The small decrepit docks that existed at City Point prior to the Union takeover began receiving supplies immediately. Simultaneous, Ingalls' construction crews worked feverishly. By the end of June, the wharves had been rebuilt and, by August 1<sup>st</sup>, the warehouses were complete and operational. A visitor would have noted a vast fleet of anywhere from 150 to 200 ships stretched as far as the eye could see, anchored off City Point and awaiting their chance to unload cargo. Over 390 ships worked routinely between City Point and the other Union ports and supply centers.

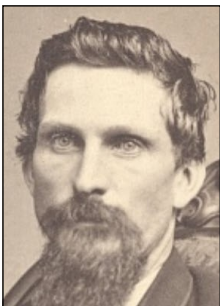
The 3,000 wharf workers consisted mostly of freed slaves. The number of ships that could be unloaded each day varied anywhere from two to twenty-five based on the size and type of cargo. The wharves extended eastward along the southern banks of the James River for over half a mile. The wharves facilities covered over 350,000 square feet or 8 acres with almost 2 acres under cover.

Here ships and barges from Boston, Philadelphia, New York City, Baltimore, and Washington City brought war matériel such as train engines and cars, heavy artillery, wagons, pontoons, uniforms, small arms, and draft animals for the army's use. In addition, the ships brought a steady and welcome supply of rations to the Union troops in the field. The facilities permitted cargo to be loaded straight from the ship to either railcars or wagons. The harbor docking area was segmented into specific wharves for the different commodities.

The major departments, such as the Repair Shop, managed their own wharves in order for them to control all areas that may influence their operations and the flow of supplies to the soldiers. The harbor's port facilities consisted of eight huge wharves with a city of warehouses and support buildings capable of unloading 25 ships daily. The number of personnel manning the harbor facilities, and making it one of the busiest in the world, was equivalent in size to that of an entire Union division, i.e., 10,000 men.

## The Rail System

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, the same day that Grant put Chief Quartermaster Maj. Gen. Ingalls in charge of creating the wharves and warehouses, he assigned Chief Engineer and Superintendent of the U.S. Military Railroad, James J. Moore, to create the railroad infrastructure at City Point and to extend the Petersburg and City Point Railroad to run parallel behind the Union lines.



*Superintendent  
of the USMRR  
James J. Moore*

The twelve-mile-long City Point Railroad had connected the deepwater port with Petersburg before the war, although, by the time the Siege of Petersburg began, the railroad was unserviceable.

By July 5<sup>th</sup>, Moore's crews had repaired bridges, replaced missing iron rails, replaced rotted wooden ties, and adjusted the track gauge from 5 ft. to the Union

standard 4 ft. 8.5 in., thus controlling a seven-mile stretch from the City Point terminus toward Petersburg. This terminated at Pitkin Station, 1.6 miles from Petersburg and just out of artillery range from Confederate lines.

Moore's crews then surveyed and built an entirely new line beyond that point, extending the military railroad south, southwest, and finally west. This new route ran parallel to and about a mile behind the Union siege works. As the army extended their siege works and trenches along their left flank, the railroad crews extended their rail line as well. Nine miles of track were completed by the end of Sept. 1864, extending to the Weldon & Petersburg Railroad and the headquarters of the Union Fifth Corps, which composed the left flank of the Union line at the time.

The construction of this railroad was relatively primitive. Very little grading was done, with the tracks following the lay of the land. One staff officer wrote, "It ran up hill and down dale, and its undulations were so marked that a train moving along it looked in the distance like a fly crawling over a corrugated washboard."

The rail was laid with iron taken up from the Richmond & York River Railroad, which had been serving as Grant's line of supply before the army's move to Petersburg. Regular scheduled service along the former Petersburg & City Point RR, renamed the Military RR, aka City Point & Army RR, started on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1864.

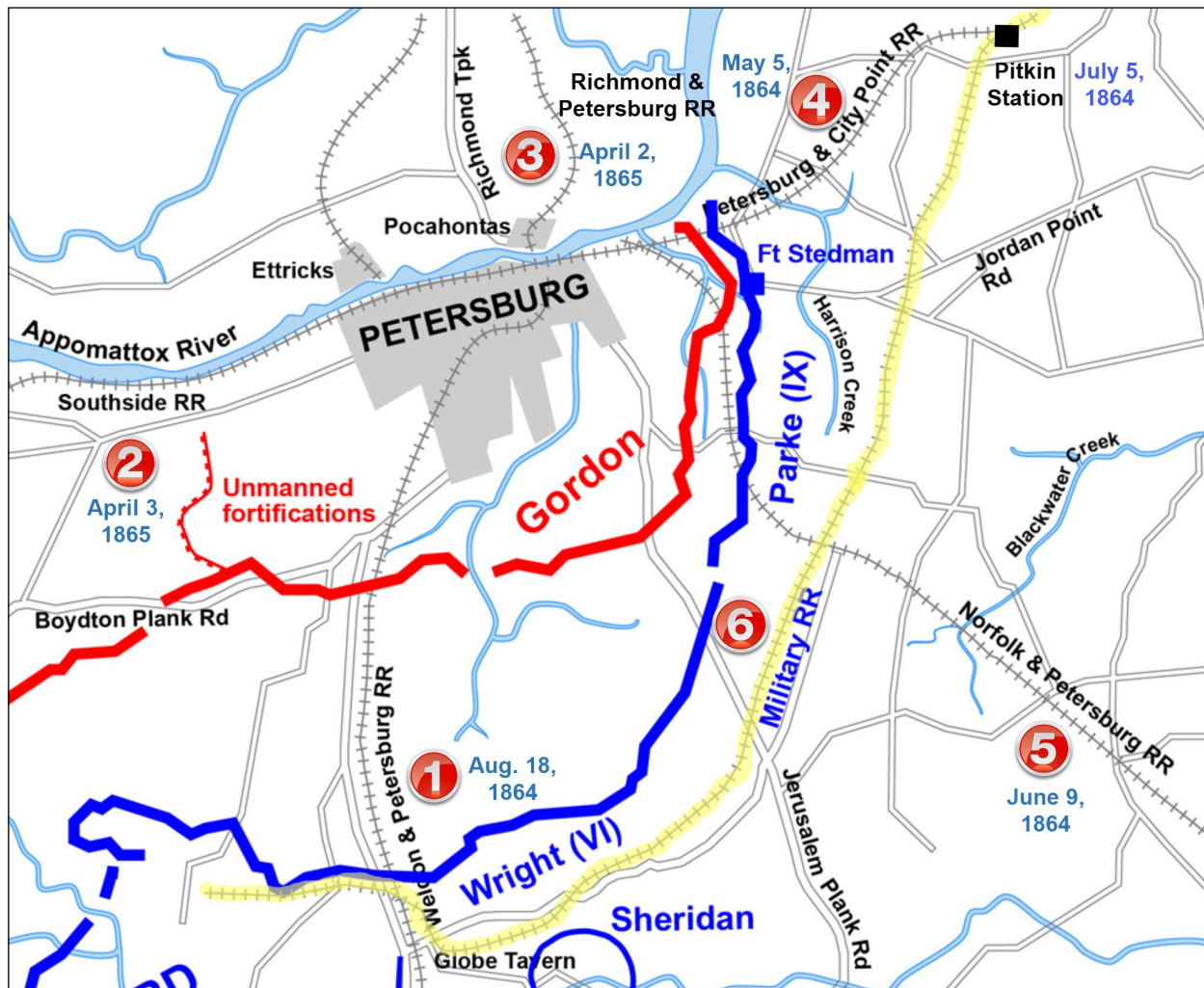
By the end of the siege, a total of 22 miles of railroad was built and operational. As many as fifteen trains a day ran on the system, with each train capable of carrying 1,400 tons of supplies – the equivalent of 100 wagons. The result of this construction was that for much of the siege almost all of the long Union line south of the Appomattox was less than two miles from the railroad in all weather, drastically reducing the distance they would have to be dragged by mule along the muddy and often bottomless Virginia country roads.

This didn't just mean food and ammunition could reach the fighting line much easier and quicker. The total tonnage of supplies needed was reduced, since the use of draft animals was cut drastically. Even mules eat ten times the weight in food as a soldier – the rule of thumb was that for every wagon hauling supplies a second was needed to haul fodder for the animals. A typical train replaced 100 wagons that would have been pulled by six hundred hungry mules and driven by a hundred hungry teamsters.

The railroad had immense tactical benefits as well. Troops could be pulled out of the trenches and quickly transported to almost any other part of the line, arriving faster and less exhausted than their counterparts in grey, who had to struggle the entire distance on muddy roads.

The rail system represented one of the most impressive and important aspects of City Point. The rail system efficiently linked all areas of the depot at City Point with the battle front around Petersburg. As the Union railroads spread around the battlefield of Petersburg, it increased Grant's combat effectiveness and chances of mission success; while at the same time, it had an adverse effect on General Lee's ability to wage war. Lee's troops were tied down protecting his railroads and their corresponding

*(Continued on page 7)*



Map by Hal Jespersen, [www.posix.com/CW](http://www.posix.com/CW), CC BY 3.0

The map depicted above is a blown-up portion of a larger map called *Siege of Petersburg, Actions Preceding Five Forks*. Added by the author: numerical labels identifying the five railroads radiating from Petersburg; the dates of their Union capture; the yellow highlighting of the U.S. Military RR, aka City Point & Army RR, built behind and parallel to the Union entrenchments and siege works; the label identifying the Richmond & Petersburg RR; and the Union's Pitkin Station, its label, and date of completion. All track originally radiating from Petersburg was 5 ft. gauge.

- (1) Weldon & Petersburg RR, running **S** 60 miles to Garysburg, NC on the north side of the Roanoke River and then across the river to Weldon, NC. From Weldon, the Wilmington & Weldon RR continued another 175 miles to the port city of Wilmington, NC, the last remaining open Confederate port as of Aug. 5, 1864 when the entrance to Mobile Bay was captured by R. Adm. David Farragut.
- (2) Southside RR, running **WSW** 124 miles to Lynchburg, VA. It was the last of the five Petersburg rail lines to remain under Confederate control.
- (3) Richmond & Petersburg RR, running **N** 22 miles and connecting the two cities. Despite its name, however, the southern terminus of the railroad was actually in the suburb of Pocahontas, which lay on the north bank of the Appomattox River across from Petersburg. Goods and passengers had to be off-loaded and disembarked at the Pocahontas station and then transported by wagon and carriage across a bridge into Petersburg.
- (4) Petersburg & City Point RR, running **NE** 8.6 miles to the City Point terminus. The U.S. Military Railroad rebuilt part of it in Union standard 4 ft. 8.5 in. gauge as it created the City Point & Army RR.
- (5) Norfolk & Petersburg RR, running **SE** 85 miles to Norfolk, VA.
- (6) U.S. Military RR, aka City Point & Army RR, in standard 4 ft. 8.5 in. gauge, running 18.5 miles mostly **SSW**, then **SW**, and then **W**, starting at the City Point terminus. The length was 21.75 miles if branches and sidings are included. During the siege, 11.5 miles of new track was laid beyond where the US Military RR branched off from the Petersburg & City Point RR at Pitkin Station, 1.6 miles outside of Petersburg.



(Continued from page 5)

"lifelines" to Richmond and the dying Confederacy. The rail lines greatly reduced the time required to get the supplies and soldiers to the front. Grant used these rail lines to quickly move vast numbers of troops around the battlefield. The 600,000 tons of supplies and equipment moved by the railroad reduced the number of wagons required by 50 percent or 5,000.

As the Union siege works grew southeast of Petersburg, the construction crews built the rail lines behind the Union lines. Eventually, the rail lines stretched twenty-two miles around Petersburg. Throughout the distance of the track, the crews built stations, sidings and platforms which increased the speed of distribution and reduced the amount of handling necessary to get the supplies in the hands of the front line soldiers.

As many as two-dozen locomotives were used to transport troops and a daily average of 1,400 tons of supplies from City Point to the front lines. On the return trip, the trains carried the sick and wounded back to the hospitals located at City Point.

Mike Willegal, at <http://www.willegal.net/railroad/citypoint/cprailroad.htm>, indicated that he was able to document twenty-one locomotives that were used on the Military Line at one time or another. He guessed that, during the Petersburg Siege, there were approximately 700 cars in the U.S. Military Railroad in the Virginia department. This calculation puts about ninety cars at City Point. If eight trains are run per day with an average of ten cars per train, this adds up to eighty carloads of goods per day. Note that the U.S. Military Railroad operated with a philosophy of immediately unloading goods once a train arrived at a station. Also note that the City Point & Army RR line was short enough that each engine and car could potentially be scheduled twice per day. It would require an absolute minimum of forty cars to operate this sort of schedule, so his estimate could possibly be close to actual.

### Breakthrough and Victory

Grant eventually stretched Lee's lines beyond their limits by constantly extending his left flank. This led to a Union breakthrough at Five Forks on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1865, severing the Southside Railroad, Lee's last lifeline. Lee abandoned Petersburg and Richmond on April 2<sup>nd</sup> and retreated west. Union President Abraham Lincoln visited the evacuated Richmond on April 4<sup>th</sup> and was mobbed by crowds of former slaves.

Dogged by Union forces, Lee was finally cornered and surrounded near Appomattox Courthouse on the Appomattox River on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1865. Out of ammunition, food, clothing, and reinforcements, Lee and his whittled-down remnant of the once-vaunted Army of Northern Virginia were forced to surrender to Grant later that same day, effectively ending the Civil War. Lincoln would have less than a week to savor the Union victory before he was assassinated at Ford's Theater by Confederate sympathizer John Wilkes Booth on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1865, dying early the next morning.

## Getting Even

On July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1864 at 4:44 a.m., Union miners of the 48<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Regiment exploded 8,000 lbs. of gunpowder at the end of a 510-ft. horizontal mine shaft that they had dug under the Confederate's Elliott's Salient outside Petersburg. The explosion created a crater 130 ft. long, 60 ft. wide and 30 ft. deep. A total of 252 Confederates were killed outright.

A debacle ensued as the Union break-through troops, instead of going around the perimeter of the crater, went down into the crater, and were trapped due to the steep sides. The uninjured Confederates in that area quickly recovered from their shock and slaughtered the Union troops like fish in a barrel. Worst of all, raw U.S. Colored Troops were fed into the fray, only to receive "no quarter" from the enemy.

In quick retaliation for "The Crater", Confederate Secret Service Bureau agents undertook to destroy the depot of the Union Army's City Point depot just ten days later. A "horological torpedo" (time bomb) with a 1-hour timer was placed on one of the numerous ordnance barges, containing field gun ammunition and which at the time was being unloaded at the main wharf, 300 yards from where General Grant was seated under a large tree.

The bomb detonated at about 11:30 a.m. on the morning of Aug. 9<sup>th</sup>, 1864. The explosion triggered a second barge to also explode. In all, about five-hundred tons of fixed ammunition were set off. The resulting explosion produced total wreckage of the extended line of wharves and storehouses. Confederates later estimated that about \$4,000,000 of Union property had been destroyed.

In his report to Maj. Gen. Halleck on Aug. 11<sup>th</sup>, Grant included "a list of casualties from the explosion of the ammunition barge on the 9<sup>th</sup> instant: Killed, 12 enlisted men, 2 citizen employees, 1 citizen not employed by Government, 28 colored laborers. Wounded: 3 commissioned officers, 4 enlisted men, 15 citizen employees, 86 colored laborers. Besides these were 18 others wounded, soldiers and citizens not belonging about the wharf. The damage to property was large, but I have not the means of reporting it."



*The photo above shows the rebuilt magazine storehouse, placed on a wharf extending far out into the James River at a safe enough distance that there would be no repeat of the Aug. 9<sup>th</sup> disaster. Note the railroad tracks leading out to the storehouse, allowing ordnance to be quickly loaded or unloaded.*

# News of the RCWRT



## Upcoming 2022 RCWRT Meetings

For March, we will once again meet in person at the NC Museum of History's Daniels auditorium with a simultaneous Zoom cast. Please note that the Museum may require the wearing of a mask.

Date	Speaker(s)	Topic
Mar. 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	Gary Dyson	Ambush of the Isaac P. Smith <b>(In person plus Zoom)</b>
Apr. 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	Freddie Kiger	"Sheer Adulterated Violence": The Battle of Sharpsburg/ Antietam
May 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	Cindy Pratt	The 135th U.S. Colored Troops Civil War Trail Marker to be displayed in Goldsboro, NC

### When is a Siege Not a Siege?

Petersburg remains the longest siege in American history but was not a siege, at least in the traditional sense.

Most accounts of the Petersburg operations refer to the actions as a siege but a siege, accurately defined, entails the surrounding and blocking of reinforcement or escape of an enemy force.

Robert E. Lee was never trapped at Petersburg—he could have left at will. Nor did the Federal forces conduct formal siege warfare by advancing trenches toward the Confederate lines.

Comparing Ulysses S. Grant's situation at Vicksburg, Mississippi, in 1863 with his Petersburg operations reveals the stark distinction between a true siege and the events at Petersburg.



### Save the 245-Acre James Custis Farm on the Site of the 1862 Battle of Williamsburg

The Battle of Williamsburg (VA) on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1862 was the first pitched battle of Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's 1862 Peninsula Campaign. The James Custis Farm witnessed some of the most desperate fighting during the battle. It made up part of the left flank of a three-mile-long Confederate line defined by a series of 14 redoubts and was the exact site where the heroics of Brig. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock earned him the sobriquet "Hancock the Superb", as relayed in a telegram to Washington by McClellan.

Your donation will be matched \$163-to-\$1 due to a number of organizational matching grants! This is your chance to contribute to the last \$57,000 needed to protect \$9.4 million of halloved ground. For more information, go to <https://www.battlefields.org/give/save-battlefields/help-preserve-245-acres-williamsburg-unheard-match>.



## The Knapsack

is the official newsletter of the RCWRT and is published around the 1st of each month.

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Readers are encouraged to submit photos, events, & articles for publication to Bob Graesser, Editor  
([RaleighCWRT@yahoo.com](mailto:RaleighCWRT@yahoo.com); 919-244-9041)

## RCWRT Board of Directors (2020-22)

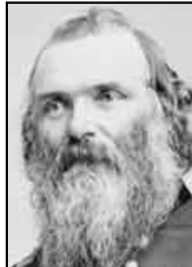
Name	Position
Josie Walker	President / Program Committee
Ted Kunstling	Past President
Johnny Wood	Vice President / Program Committee
Griff Bartlett	Secretary / Treasurer
Pattie Smith	Program Committee
Bob Graesser	Knapsack Editor / Webmaster
Wayne Shore	Member
Lloyd Townsend	Member

Paying Memberships / Total Members: 131 / 162

One New Member Joined the RCWRT in Feb. 2022:

We welcome John Rybovich of Raleigh

### Administrative Genius



Daniel McCallum

Maj. Gen. Daniel McCallum, Union Military Director and Superintendent of Railroads during the Civil War, was an administrative genius. He is credited with the creation of the first modern organization chart and the invention of the modern management system used in all large corporations to this day. He was also a master of requisitions, accounts and "red tape".

The Raleigh Civil War Round Table was formed on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2001 and is a 501(c)(3) "tax exempt organization."

We meet on the second Monday of each month (except this Dec.). We are once again meeting in person at the NC Museum of History, 5 East Edenton Street, Raleigh, NC starting at 6:30 p.m. to allow 30 min. for mingling.

Annual membership dues are \$30 (individual and family) and \$10 for teachers. Student membership is free. Half-year memberships are available March through May for \$20. Dues should be submitted to Griff Bartlett, Treasurer, 908 Kinsdale Drive, Raleigh, NC 27615-1117 by **Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>** each year.