



Robert E. Lee
Commander, Army of Northern Virginia

May 4, 1864 – the Union Army of the Potomac crossed the Rapidan River west of Fredericksburg setting into motion the bloodiest and most decisive campaign of the Civil War.

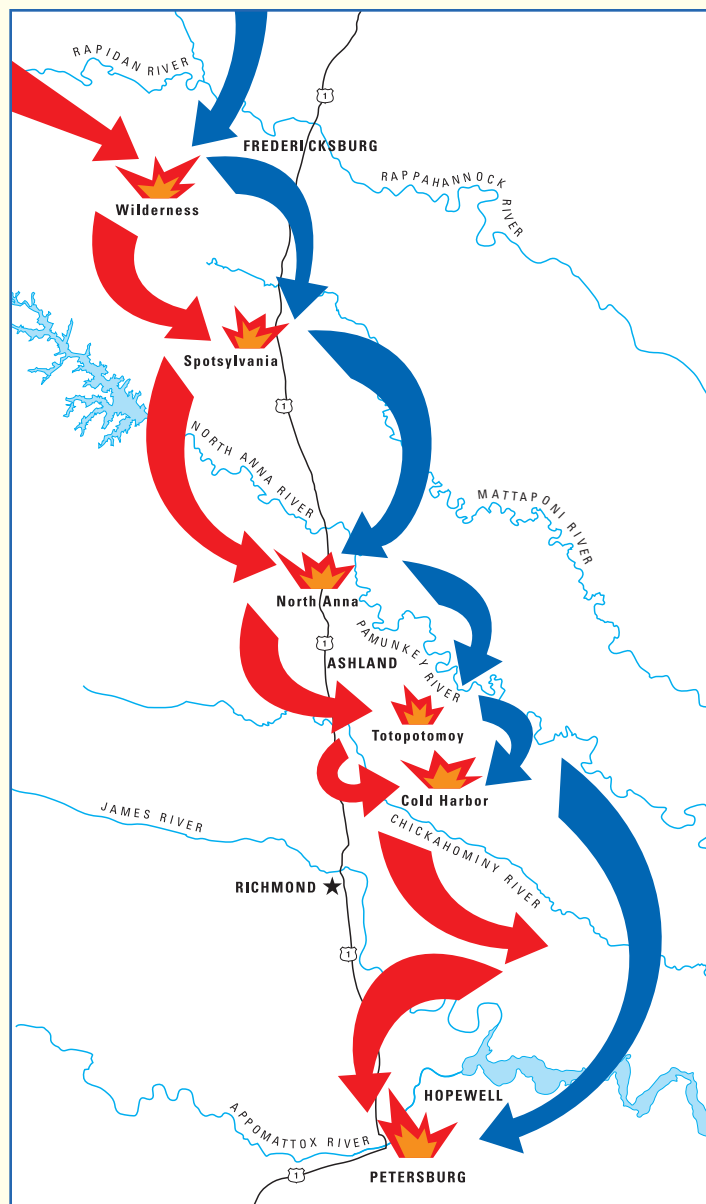
Robert E. Lee moved quickly to meet the challenge. The Confederate commander had just 60,000 soldiers with which to stop Grant's 120,000-man juggernaut. He had faced such odds before, and each time he had turned back the threat.

However, this time a new Union general-in-chief was traveling with the Federal forces. Gen. U.S. Grant would prove to be made of tougher stuff.

The Confederates delivered devastating blows to the Union advance as it moved through the tangled Wilderness south of the Rapidan, May 5-6. Rather than turn back as others had done, Grant pushed his army south toward Spotsylvania Court House.

Lee beat him there, barely. For nearly two weeks, the armies stood and fought – sometimes hand-to-hand – as Lee resisted blow after blow.

Failing to break through at Spotsylvania, Grant maneuvered cross-country, sliding south and east around the Confederate army. Lee, mirroring the Union movements, built a strong line of earthen fortifications protecting a critical rail junction south of the North Anna River.



When Grant's Union army (in blue) crossed the Rapidan River in May, 1864, Lee's under-manned Confederate troops (in red) moved quickly to engage them. The Union forces, though consistently repelled, continued to swing wide to the east and down to the south toward Richmond and Petersburg. Confederate troops mirrored the Union descent, meeting them in some of the most fierce battles of the war.

The battered Confederate army again turned the Northerners back, but Grant moved again, around the North Anna lines, and to the Pamunkey River. Lee moved to block Grant's progress. He held another strong position behind the Totopotomoy Creek. After three days of sporadic skirmishing, Grant turned his attention toward the Old Cold Harbor crossroads. The Union army now was positioned to threaten the Confederate capital itself.

After nearly a month of continuous fighting, Confederate soldiers found themselves digging defensive lines with Richmond at their backs.

Grant launched a desperate dawn attack against those earthen defenses near Cold Harbor, June 3. He lost nearly 5,000 men in less than an hour. Lee had won his last major victory.

On June 12, Grant again disengaged and moved south. The Union army crossed the James River and marched toward Petersburg and its vital rail connections to the south. Lee once again moved to meet the threat, but this time the Confederates were pinned down.

Grant, utilizing his greater numbers, stretched Lee's army to the breaking point. On April 2, 1865, the Confederate line snapped. The Army of Northern Virginia abandoned Richmond and started west. Appomattox was a week away.



Ulysses S. Grant
General-in-Chief, United States Forces

SUPPLY AND LOGISTICS



U.S. Grant (right) looks on as President Lincoln is briefed by an officer on a hill overlooking the Union army's huge supply depot at City Point on the James River.

Battles are decided on battlefields; campaigns are decided by logistics. As the Union Army of the Potomac moved south toward Richmond in the spring and summer of 1864, its soldiers required tons of food, clothing, forage, ammunition, and other equipment to function and survive. An interruption—even for a few days—could spell disaster.

Union control of the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia's navigable rivers in 1864 gave the Union high command the ability to move vast amounts of supplies by water to rapidly moving soldiers.

Huge Union river bases at Belle Plain and Aquia Landing (Potomac), the White House (Pamunkey), and City Point (James) were established as the army moved south. In order to maintain contact with his bases,

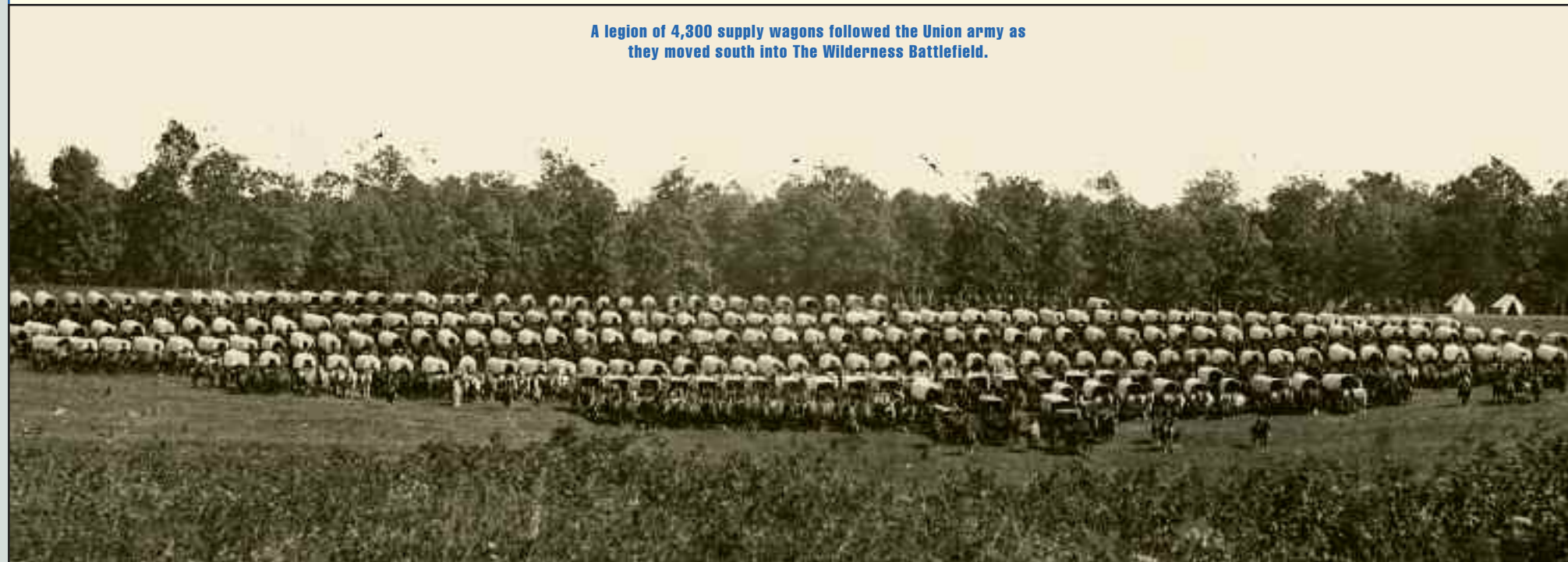
Grant had to keep his back to the rivers. Consequently, he always moved by the left flank, to the east, when maneuvering around Lee's army.

From those depots, miles of wagon trains and railroads delivered supplies to the front lines.

Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia relied on railroads for supply during the 1864 campaign. Lee fought to protect his rail lifelines at Hanover Junction (the intersection of the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac and the Virginia Central lines) and at Petersburg.

But the weight of Union provisions—skillfully brought to bear by Federal officers—and the tenuous nature of Confederate supply lines proved decisive.

A legion of 4,300 supply wagons followed the Union army as they moved south into the Wilderness Battlefield.



THE CAPITAL OF THE CONFEDERACY



One of the war's largest prison camps was Richmond's Belle Isle. Today a suspended footbridge enables visitors to cross the James River to this site where tens of thousands of Union soldiers were imprisoned and many perished.

Richmond became the capital of the Confederate States of America in the spring of 1861. The prosperous Upper-South city seemed an improbable choice to many, located only 100 miles south of the Union capital at Washington, D.C.

Yet Richmond survived as the capital for nearly four years. During the war, the city became a center for wounded soldiers and prisoners of war. Its industrial capacity turned out thousands of weapons used by Confederate troops in the field. Richmond was host to President Jefferson Davis and to the Confederate legislature. The city took on symbolic meaning to both sides.

Union armies moved into Richmond's suburbs twice during the war. Union Gen. George McClellan marched his soldiers within hearing of Richmond's church bells in 1862, and U.S. Grant approached the city in 1864. Each time, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia turned back the threat.

Richmond finally fell April 2-3, 1865, when Lee's lines at Petersburg collapsed. As Davis and his government prepared to leave the city, fires set by evacuating Confederate troops to prevent warehouses full of supplies from falling into Union hands began consuming the commercial district of the city.



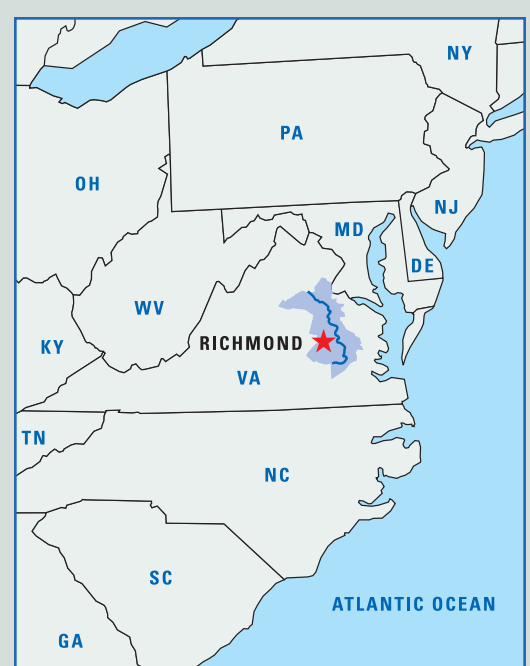
A Currier and Ives print of the fall of Richmond in April, 1865. The city was partially destroyed by fires which rampaged out of control after being set by the evacuating Confederate troops.



The CSS Richmond returns to the naval yards located across the James River from Rocketts Landing.

LEE VS GRANT THE 1864 CAMPAIGN

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LEE VS GRANT THE 1864 CAMPAIGN

How to use this Map-Guide

The main part of this guide suggests a driving tour that follows the bloodiest march in American history. Two of the greatest armies this country has ever fielded slugged it out for more than a month in the spring and early summer of 1864. They battled across 100-miles of central Virginia, leaving tens of thousands of dead and wounded in their wake. Follow the soldiers by taking the "Blue Line" tour from the Rapidan River crossing at Germanna south to the gates of Petersburg. Peel back the years while driving, walking or biking the roads the soldiers used. Stop at the places they made famous. The entire tour from start to finish takes a full two days and covers four national battlefields. But feel free to opt for part of the tour. Slow down. Take a couple of the historic back roads. Visit a small town. Discover American history at its most dramatic, now unlocked from the landscape by Civil War Trails interpretive signs, indicated by the red stars (denoting 1864 campaign sites) and blue dots (denoting other Civil War sites) on the maps.



For more detailed travel information, stop by any Virginia Welcome Center or local/regional visitor center or contact any of the attractions or visitor bureaus listed in this guide. For additional Civil War Trails information, visit www.CivilWarTrails.org. For more Virginia travel information, see www.Virginia.org.



Follow these signs to more than 1,000 Civil War sites.

THE CIVIL WAR REVISITED

The following further explore and expand on the story of the Civil War:

- Ashland/Hanover Visitor Center**
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www.town.ashland.va.us
- Charlottesville/Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau**
877-386-1103
www.visitcharlottesville.org
- Culpeper Visitor Center**
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- Dabbs House Museum**
804-652-3406
www.co.henrico.va.us/rec
- Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park**
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www.nps.gov/frsp/vc.htm
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J.E.B. Stuart's coat and blood-stained sash, exhibited at the Virginia Historical Society.

The Confederate White House in Richmond has been restored to its 1860s appearance.



BLACK TROOPS



First Sergeant Powhatan Beaty, 5th U.S. Colored Troops

African Americans made significant contributions to both the Union and Confederate war efforts in Virginia. Free blacks and slaves provided much of the labor for miles of earthen fortifications protecting Confederate strongholds at Richmond and Petersburg.

During the 1864 Virginia campaigns, black troops saw serious action for the Union cause. The United States Colored Troops (USCT) fought hard at Baylor's Farm, Deep Bottom, New Market Heights and Fort Gilmer.

