

THE SIEGE OF

The Battles for the
Weldon Railroad August 1864

PETERSBURG

John Horn



Savas Beatie
California

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Nothing is impossible to men determined to win.

— *Maj. Gen. Henry Heth, C. S. A.*



To Mrs. Helen M. McDonough, my wife's grandmother, born Helen Lee Mulcaha, granddaughter of Thomas Mulcaha, who was born in Ireland around 1826, arrived in Mobile, Alabama in 1856, found employment as a farmhand in Yazoo County, Mississippi by 1860, enlisted in the 12th Mississippi Infantry at Satartia, Mississippi in 1861, married Miss Susan Bacon at Dinwiddie Court House, Virginia on November 29, 1864, was wounded at the Fort Gregg, April 2, 1865, and died in Petersburg, Virginia, Aug. 18, 1908.

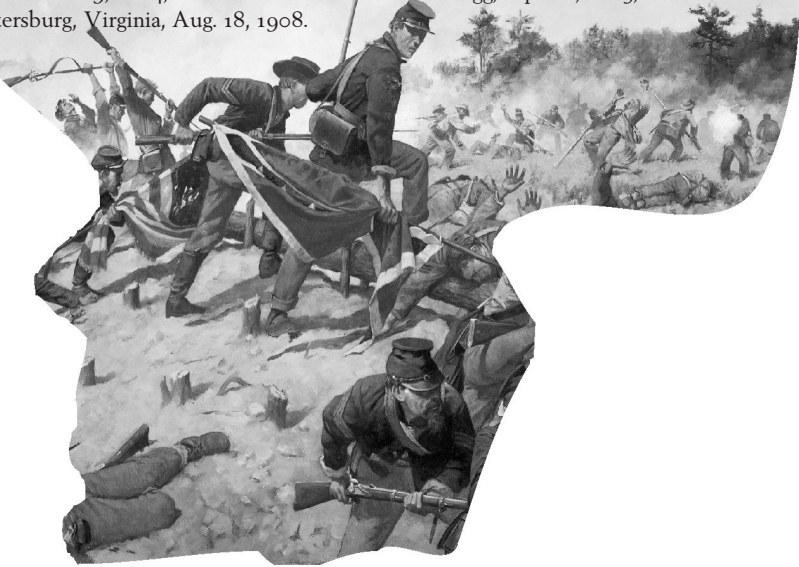


Table of Contents

Preface to the First Edition

vii

Preface to the 150th Anniversary Edition / Acknowledgments

vii

Chapter 1: The War at its Crisis

1

Chapter 2: The Second Battle of Deep Bottom,

August 14, 1864

15

Chapter 3: The Second Battle of Deep Bottom,

August 15, 1864

49

Chapter 4: The Second Battle of Deep Bottom,

August 16, 1864

61

Chapter 5: The Second Battle of Deep Bottom,

August 17-21, 1864

105

Chapter 6: The Battle of Globe Tavern,

August 18, 1864

116

Chapter 7: The Battle of Globe Tavern,

August 19, 1864

140

Chapter 8: The Battle of Globe Tavern,

August 20, 1864

178

Chapter 9: The Battle of Globe Tavern,

August 21, 1864

187

Chapter 10: Wrecking the Weldon Railroad,

August 21-24, 1864

211

Table of Contents (continued)

Chapter 11: The Second Battle of Reams Station, August 25, 1864	227
Chapter 12: The Second Battle of Reams Station, August 25, 1864: The Second Confederate Assault	251
Chapter 13: Had Not Success Come Elsewhere	287
Table 1: Federal Strength, July 31, 1864	315
Table 2: Confederate Strength, July-August, 1864	316
Table 3: Casualties	317
Table 4: Combat Efficiency	319
Appendix A: Orders of Battle, Second Deep Bottom	321
Appendix B: Orders of Battle, Globe Tavern	330
Appendix C: Orders of Battle, Second Reams Station	339
Bibliography	345
Index	358

Maps and illustrations have been distributed throughout the book for the convenience of the reader.

Preface to the First Edition

The battles that took place around Petersburg in August of 1864 have not received the attention that they deserve. Fought during the crisis of morale in the North, they displayed Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant at the height of his generalship and the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia at the peak of its qualitative superiority. Grant's Fourth Offensive, which gave rise to the August battles, ranks as the longest and among the two bloodiest of Grant's nine offensives during the Petersburg campaign.

The August battles around Petersburg have suffered neglect because they occurred between the Battle of the Crater and the fall of Atlanta. Yet the Fourth Offensive adhered to the same basic plan that resulted in the Battle of the Crater. The Fourth Offensive also contributed to the fall of Atlanta by preventing the Confederate government from detaching troops from Virginia and sending them to assist in the defense of Atlanta. The fall of Atlanta proved decisive to President Abraham Lincoln's reelection and fatal to the prospect of Southern independence.

The author hopes that this book will heighten interest in the August battles around Petersburg and in the Petersburg campaign as a whole, the longest, bloodiest campaign of the American Civil War.

Preface to the 150th Anniversary Edition

How fortunate to get the opportunity to revise my first book and take advantage of what I have learned since writing it. If only we got a chance to

correct all our mistakes. Doubtless, some errors remain, but this edition should provide a richer and more accurate experience for the reader.

Over the years I have reversed course entirely when it comes to footnotes. In the first edition of this book, I footnoted everything. I believe I choked the first edition with footnotes. Since writing that book, though, I have concluded that footnoting everything is unnecessary. Take a look at a history books on other wars—Barbara W. Tuchman’s *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century*, or Robert Middlekauff’s *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*, or Max Hasting’s *Overlord: D-Day & the Battle for Normandy*,¹ for examples. None of them has a note after every sentence. None has a note at the end of every paragraph trying to do the work of a bibliography. In this revised edition, I have footnoted only direct quotations, statistics, and controversial assertions. The footnotes more than suffice for a book of this length. I have written a book, not a brief.

I hope I have enriched the book by including some biographical information about the soldiers involved. Part of the purpose of writing history lies in commemorating deeds such as the troops of both sides performed in August, 1864. The number of soldiers who returned to the ranks after amputations or crippling wounds amazes me.

Petersburg remains the Rodney Dangerfield of Civil War campaigns. It gets no respect. I can never forget the story of the old lady from Petersburg who visited relatives in England and went with them to see Shakespeare’s King Richard III. When asked how she enjoyed the play, she said, “I thought it was unfair.” Asked to explain that puzzling remark, she replied, “There was all that talk about Norfolk and Richmond, and not a word about Petersburg!”²

Acknowledgments

A number of people and institutions deserve recognition for their assistance with this book.

1 Barbara W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978); Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Max Hasting, *Overlord: D-Day & the Battle for Normandy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1984).

2 James G. Scott and Edward A. Wyatt, *Petersburg’s Story: A History* (Petersburg, 1960), 14.

Christopher Calkins, former Park Historian at Petersburg National Battlefield, informed me of the opportunity to write this book and made available to me his own research and mapwork on the Battle of Globe Tavern and the Second Battle of Reams Station. Chris also reviewed and commented on my chapters on these battles and drew all the maps for the first edition of the book.

Harold E. Howard, former publisher of the Virginia Civil War Battles and Leaders Series, gave me the opportunity to write the book.

Edwin C. Bearss, former Chief Historian of the United States National Park Service, took time out from his busy schedule to read and comment on my manuscript.

Bryce A. Suderow, at work on his own book on the First and Second Battles of Deep Bottom, generously shared with me his research, map files and insights. He provided me with cited material on each of the battles described in this book, and with almost all of my citations to Confederate newspapers. Bryce also walked the Second Deep Bottom battlefield with me. Diane Svenonius transported Bryce from Washington, D.C. to Richmond that day, accompanied us on our tour of the battlefield, and shared with us her knowledge of its terrain.

Mike Andrus of the staff at Richmond National Battlefield made available to me his research and map files on the Second Battle of Deep Bottom. Mike also reviewed and commented upon my chapters on the Second Battle of Deep Bottom.

Guy R. Swanson, Curator of Manuscripts and Archives at the Museum of the Confederacy, gave me access to the papers of Major General Henry Heth in the Elizabeth S. Brockenbrough Library.

Frances Pollard of the Virginia Historical Society photocopied and mailed to me Major General Cadmus M. Wilcox's report of the Second Battle of Reams Station.

Dr. John T. Hendron of Steger, Illinois, an associate professor of history, read and commented on my manuscript.

Richard A. Shrader, Reference Archivist at the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, provided a complimentary copy of a Confederate officer's reminiscences.

Steven J. Wright of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, photocopied and sent me material from the Sessler Collection at the Civil War Library and Museum. Steven also reviewed and commented on my chapters on the Second Battle of Reams Station.

Doris Stack of Chicago took the time to bring a book cited herein twenty miles on a cold day.

Chicago's Newberry Library, where I did the vast preponderance of my research, afforded me a Reader's privileges—most importantly, a carrel. Most of my bibliography sat on the shelves of this library.

The Bedford Park Public Library of Bedford Park, Illinois, eased my task by allowing me to keep out the pertinent volumes of the Official Records for long periods of time.

The staff of the Civil War And American History Research Collection of the Chicago Public Library assisted me in locating illustrations for the book.

The Bremen Historical Society of Tinley Park, Illinois provided the missing link that made a project that arose from my family's past particularly relevant to my own present by enlightening me as to the identity and history of the company of my township's Civil War soldiers.

Concerning this revised edition, I am particularly grateful to Theodore P. Savas, Managing Director for Savas Beatie LLC, for kindly inviting me to write this new expanded edition of my book, and for all the help provided by Production Director Lee Merideth.

Bryce Suderow of Washington, D.C., an outstanding researcher and an expert on the Deep Bottom battles, again—as with the first edition of this book—generously shared his research and conclusions with me. I could not have written the first edition without his help, much less this edition. Hampton Newsome of Arlington, Virginia, author of his own book on the October portion of the Petersburg Campaign, not only took the trouble to read my manuscript and offer suggestions and insights but provided the maps as well. I cannot thank Hampton enough for his immense contribution. Robert E. L. Krick of Richmond National Battlefield Park kindly read part of my manuscript and offered suggestions. Lt. Col. Henry W. Persons, United States Army (ret.), of Severn, Maryland, generously shared his research on Anderson's Brigade of the Army of Northern Virginia with me. David White of Manassas, Virginia, generously shared his research on Sanders' brigade of the Army of Northern Virginia with me. David Fletcher of Richmond, Virginia generously shared his documents and research on his ancestor, Capt. (later Lt. Col.) Theophilus Gilliam Barham of the 24th Virginia Cavalry. Brett Schulte graciously shared from his trove of material on the Petersburg campaign. Peter Trasskey helped as well. Last but not least, thanks go to my long-suffering wife and law partner, H. Elizabeth Kelley, and our office manager, JoAnn Buckmaster of Griffith, Indiana, as well as JoAnn's assistant, Brooke Sporleder.

John Horn
Tinley Park, IL
July 2014

The War at its Crisis

At the beginning of August 1864, the fortunes of the United States stood near their low water mark. Those fortunes manifested themselves in the price of gold on the New York Stock Exchange. Traditionally, the price of gold has furnished a pitiless, impartial, inverse index of faith in the established order—the higher the price of gold, the less the faith. On July 11, 1864, as Lt. Gen. Jubal A. Early led a Rebel infantry corps into the suburbs of the Northern capital at Washington, D.C., the price of gold reached its wartime high and the price of a dollar in United States currency reached its wartime low.

The Confederacy had withstood the onslaughts of the two major Union army commands, one launched at the Southern capital in Richmond, Virginia, and the other at the important rail and commercial center in Atlanta, Georgia. The appalling casualties suffered by Federal troops from the beginning of May until the end of July, more than 84,000 in Lt. Gen. Ulysses Simpson Grant's army group alone, seemed in vain.

Grant, general-in-chief of Northern forces, had failed to take Richmond. Gloom and disgust prevailed among his officers and men in the aftermath of the fiasco at the battle of the Crater at Petersburg, Virginia, on July 30.¹

1 For accounts of the Petersburg campaign up to this point, see John Horn, *The Petersburg Campaign: June 1864–April 1865* (Conshohocken PA, 1993), 12–119, and Edwin C. Bearss with

Major General William Tecumseh Sherman had failed to capture Atlanta. In a series of battles, skirmishes and raids lasting from July 20 until August 6, Southerners under Gen. John Bell Hood had halted Sherman's infantry and decimated his cavalry in their efforts to cut the last railroads into Atlanta.

Rear Admiral David G. Farragut's victory in the battle of Mobile Bay on August 5 started the price of gold on a decline it would continue until the end of the month. Though reassuring to the financial community, success at Mobile Bay provided little consolation to the Union electorate for the failures at Richmond and Atlanta.

Public sentiment against the war increased in the North. President of the United States Abraham Lincoln encountered threats of forcible resistance when, on July 18, he called for a draft of 500,000 more men. At the request of Congress, he declared August 4 a day of national fasting, humiliation and prayer.

The Secessionists had not merely frustrated the Federals. The Rebels had taken the offensive. General Robert Edward Lee had detached Early's Corps from the Army of Northern Virginia in early June to march down the Shenandoah Valley and threaten Washington. The move had struck the Northerners a substantial blow. Much as Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson had done in 1862, Early cleared the Shenandoah of Federal troops, diverted reinforcements from the Unionist command threatening Richmond, and shook the United States War Department's confidence in its general-in-chief's strategy.

Lee wanted more than this. He wanted to raise the siege of Petersburg and drive the Northerners from Richmond's doorstep. The war's heretofore master psychologist pinned his hopes on the effect that Early's threat to the Union capital would have on the command beleaguering Petersburg. Half the railroads supplying Richmond—the Weldon Railroad and the Southside Railroad—had terminals in the Cockade City, a name Petersburg had acquired because an infantry company raised there had worn rosettes, or cockades, in their hats during the War of 1812. The loss of the Cockade City would put the Federals in excellent position to cut Richmond's remaining supply lines and isolate the Confederate capital. As Grant believed in overwhelming numbers, Lee reasoned to his staff, detachment of sufficient force to protect Washington

from Early would so reduce Grant's strength that he would withdraw from Petersburg altogether.

Lee's indirect strategy seemed on the verge of even greater success than it had produced in 1862, when it had merely denied reinforcements to the Unionists in front of Richmond. On the night of July 30, after receiving news that Early had crossed the Potomac into Union territory again, Grant sent the following telegram to Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade, the commander of the Army of the Potomac: "Get all the heavy artillery in the lines about Petersburg moved back to City Point as early as possible." Then the general-in-chief added ominously: "It is by no means improbable the necessity will arise for sending two more corps there."² This message indicates exactly how close to success Lee's strategy came. Many on both sides, including knowledgeable observers in high places, expected that Lee would soon march his entire army into Union territory as he had in 1862 and 1863.

Panicky Republican politicians clamored for a new convention and for President Lincoln to step aside for a candidate who could win in the November election. More level-headed Republicans pressured Lincoln to abandon abolition as a stated condition of peace and to insist upon the Union alone as peace's condition. As staunchly Republican a newspaper as the *New York Times* criticized Lincoln for not negotiating with the commissioners whom President of the Confederate States Jefferson Davis had sent to Niagara Falls to take advantage of Northern war weariness by proposing a peace conference. Threatening to split the Republican vote, Maj. Gen. John Charles Fremont, famous as "The Pathfinder" for his western explorations, entered the presidential race as a radical Republican candidate. The Democrats indulged themselves in optimism.

Just as in 1862, Federal Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton and chief of staff Maj. Gen. Henry W. "Old Brains" Halleck cracked under the strain. In their obsession with Washington's vulnerability, they ordered Maj. Gen. David Hunter, the Union commander in the Shenandoah Valley, back and forth so many times that he soon lost contact with the enemy. The back-biting Halleck criticized Grant for moving south of James River and not keeping his army

2 U. S. Grant to Major-General George G. Meade, July 31, 1864, in United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington, 1880-1901), Series I, vol. 40, pt. 3, 641. Hereafter cited as *OR*. All references are to Series I unless otherwise noted.

group interposed between Richmond and Washington. Halleck also urged Grant to withdraw troops from his front and send them north to enforce the draft against expected resistance, concluding: “Are not the appearances such that we ought to take in sail and prepare the ship for a storm?”³

Lincoln and Grant kept their heads. Their resolve accounted for the difference between 1862, when Lee had driven Union forces from the gates of Richmond and carried the war into the North, and 1864, when Lee remained pinned down in defense of his capital. Both the president and his general-in-chief realized the extremity of the South and that the Confederacy’s only hope lay in a change of Federal administrations.

As general-in-chief, Grant had the virtue of never losing sight of the overall view. He considered the Northern armies a team, and he wanted them to apply continuous pressure on their respective fronts to prevent the enemy from concentrating against any particular Unionist army. The general-in-chief believed that a withdrawal from James River would insure Sherman’s defeat by allowing the Secessionists to shift forces from Virginia to Georgia for a repetition of Chickamauga.

President Lincoln, who had more nerve than any of his advisors, played his part by sustaining Grant against them. The bond between these two men withstood even the tension created by those who thought Grant a stronger presidential candidate than Lincoln and wanted the president to step aside in favor of the general-in-chief.

Before Early’s cavalry had burned Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, on July 30, Grant had resisted Lincoln’s request to come north in person and rectify the situation in the Shenandoah. The general-in-chief thought that his departure from the Petersburg trenches would signify a loss of faith in the strategy that had taken him south of the James. Early’s second incursion into Northern territory created such serious repercussions that during the first week of August Grant finally yielded to the president.

At a conference with Lincoln at Fortress Monroe on July 31, the general-in-chief and the president decided to deal with this crisis—perhaps the crisis of the war—not by abandoning the Siege of Petersburg, but by putting under a single commander the field forces of all four of the Shenandoah’s military departments. On August 2, Grant sent to the Shenandoah Maj. Gen.

3 H. W. Halleck to Lieut. Gen. U. S. Grant, August 11, 1864, in OR 42, pt. 2, 111-2.

Philip H. Sheridan to take command of all the troops in the field there. Grant directed Sheridan to pursue the enemy to the death.

Halleck's quibbling over this order exhausted Lincoln's patience. The president insisted upon Grant's personal presence in the vicinity of Washington not so much to protect the capital as to get the Federal forces in the Shenandoah moving aggressively after Early. Lincoln wanted a general in charge, not a bureaucrat.

Hastening by boat and train to Monocacy Station, Maryland, northwest of Washington, Grant laid the foundation for September's Union victories in the Shenandoah by removing Hunter and placing Sheridan in departmental as well as field command, then reinforcing Sheridan with another cavalry division from the Union army group threatening Richmond, and finally putting Sheridan in charge of a new military division consolidating his own department with three others. For the moment, Sheridan remained untested as an independent commander and uncharacteristically hesitant in the face of exaggerated reports of Early's strength.

Lee quickly perceived that Grant had sent reinforcements to the Shenandoah. The Virginian persisted in his strategy of threatening the Federal capital. To protect Early, Lee on August 6 dispatched to Culpeper Court House Kershaw's division of Anderson's Corps and Fitzhugh Lee's division of cavalry, both under Lt. Gen. Richard H. "Fighting Dick" Anderson, a West Pointer and Mexican War Veteran who had moved up to corps command after a Confederate bullet put out of action the previous corps commander, Lt. Gen. James Longstreet, at the battle of the Wilderness on May 6. Lee ordered Anderson to thwart any enemy move across the Blue Ridge into the Shenandoah by menacing Washington.⁴

4 Unaware of the impact of the burning of Chambersburg on the Unionists, an impact which suggested that an army burning its way through Northern territory would furnish the most effective means of relieving Richmond, Lee had already shown by the restrictions he had placed on his soldiers during the previous year's Gettysburg campaign his unreceptiveness to the notion of unleashing terror on enemy civilians as Sheridan and Sherman would soon do in the Shenandoah and the Deep South. The commander of the Army of Northern Virginia preferred what Lincoln's commanders had come to scorn as soft war, to what they had learned to esteem as hard war. Lee had gone so far during the Gettysburg campaign as to post guards at Pennsylvania farms to prevent his troops from pillaging them. He wanted to win the war, but he considered making war on enemy civilians as bad as losing. The idea repelled him, as would the notion of resorting to guerrilla warfare after Appomattox. Field Marshal Viscount Wavell of Cyrenaica and Winchester wrote of Lee, "He was possibly too much of a gentleman for the ungentle business of war." Field-Marshal Bernard Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, *A History*



Federal Pontoon Bridge at Deep Bottom *Library of Congress*

The Southerners also went on the offensive on the Petersburg front. They took steps to eliminate the Federal bridgehead at Deep Bottom. On August 7, Lt. Col. John Clifford Pemberton prepared to implement a plan that he and President Davis had formulated to drive the Unionists from the Deep Bottom bridgehead. Deep Bottom lay where Four Mile Creek emptied into the end of a wide meander of James River, about twelve miles southeast of Richmond as the crow flies. Brig. Gen. Robert Sanford Foster's brigade of the Army of the James had held the bridgehead since June 20. A bluff around forty feet high where mulberries and cherries abounded, Deep Bottom afforded Grant access to the north side of the James from Bermuda Hundred. Whenever he wanted, he could mount a threat to Richmond by reinforcing the bridgehead. Elimination of the Deep Bottom bridgehead would require the Federals to cross James River much farther downstream, significantly reducing the danger to the Confederate capital.

of Warfare (Cleveland, 1968), 24. Major General J. F. C. Fuller sheds still more light on Lee in *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant* (London, 1929), 228-31, 299-304, 375-81.

Vanquished by Grant at Vicksburg the previous summer, Pemberton served as a lieutenant colonel of artillery in the Department of Richmond because no Confederate unit warranting a higher-ranking commander would serve under the northern-born former lieutenant general. He planned to bring the pontoon bridges linking Deep Bottom with Bermuda Hundred under the fire of enough artillery to force the abandonment of the bridgehead. Heavy artillery at the foot of New Market Heights would enfilade the bridgehead from the north while rifled fieldpieces at Tilghman's Gate created a crossfire.

Despite the importance of opening fire as soon as possible, shortages delayed implementation of Pemberton's plan. They illustrated the immense difference between Northern and Southern industrial capacities. A scarcity of mortars forced Pemberton to supplement the two 10-inch mortars available with four 8-inch howitzers placed with their trails sunk to give the necessary elevation. Positioning the relatively short-ranged howitzers close enough to the pontoon bridges to render the guns effective left them outside the Confederate fortifications at New Market Heights and vulnerable to capture by a sortie from Deep Bottom. A shortage of transportation hampered moving the mortars. Lee's artillerists at Petersburg had a prior claim on the use of the sole serviceable mortar sling cart in the department. Time ticked away on an opportunity for the Secessionists to deny Grant access to the strategy he had employed the previous month and that he would employ in August and September as well—a right cross thrown at Richmond from the bridgehead at Deep Bottom, followed by a left hook delivered on the Petersburg front.

While Pemberton struggled, Grant faced his own challenges. Returning to City Point on August 9, the general-in-chief narrowly escaped death. That morning Brig. Gen. George H. Sharpe, the assistant provost-marshal-general, informed the general-in-chief that spies had infiltrated the Federal supply base at City Point. Grant's army group drew virtually all its sustenance from City Point, a port which had grown into a small city with hundreds of buildings and a wealth of supplies beyond Rebel imagination. Fleets of steamboats, sailing vessels, and barges unloaded at its wharves.

Sharpe, a New York lawyer educated at Yale, proposed a plan to detect and capture the spies. Staff officers present at this meeting included Lt. Col. Horace Porter, Grant's aide-de-camp, the son of a governor of Pennsylvania, and a graduate of Harvard and West Point. Sharpe had just left Grant when, at 11:40 a.m., Porter remembered, "a terrific explosion shook the earth, accompanied by a sound which vividly recalled the Petersburg mine, still fresh in the memory of



Lt. Col. John C. Pemberton, C.S.A. *Library of Congress*

everyone present.”⁵ Shells, shot, bullets, timber fragments, body parts and even saddles rained down on the general-in-chief’s headquarters in Appomattox Manor. A bullet wounded the hand of Col. Orville E. Babcock, another aide-de-camp and West Point graduate, but the general-in-chief escaped unscathed. A boat loaded with ordnance stores had exploded, destroying the boat and the wharf at which it lay and killing all the laborers aboard as well as

5 Horace Porter, *Campaigning with Grant* (New York, 1897), 273.

men and horses near the landing. The blast slew 43 and wounded 126.⁶ By all accounts, Grant himself behaved in exemplary fashion.⁷

John Maxwell, a Confederate spy, had built what he called a “horological torpedo”—a time bomb which contained twelve pounds of powder.⁸ He and another spy, R. K. Dillard, had entered Federal lines dressed as laborers and headed for the supply base at City Point. Mingling with the workers unloading stores from a boat, the pair placed their torpedo amid the ammunition on the boat and set the clock for half an hour to allow themselves to get far enough away to escape injury or suspicion. They underestimated the enormous blast. The bomb went off after an hour and deafened Dillard but the two spies escaped.

The Federals on James River did not remain idle. On August 10, the commander of the Army of the James, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Franklin Butler, sent a detachment from Bermuda Hundred to begin work on a canal at Dutch Gap, a few miles upriver from Deep Bottom. A lawyer and former governor of Massachusetts known to Southerners as “Beast” because they considered oppressive his occupation of New Orleans, Butler had failed in his mission to capture Richmond before Grant reached James River. Now the Beast intended to open up the James to Union ironclads by digging a new channel. Discovering the excavation, the Rebels prepared to bring Butler’s workmen under fire from field artillery and the gunboats of the Confederate Navy’s James River Flotilla. The Beast’s project would eventually result in today’s main ship channel to Richmond—but not until 1865, after its success or failure had ceased to make a difference to the outcome of the war.

Lee continued to send troops from the Petersburg front to menace Washington. On August 11, he appointed Maj. Gen. Wade Hampton III commander of the Cavalry Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia and dispatched Hampton on the 15th with Brig. Gen. Matthew Calbraith Butler’s division of horsemen to join Anderson at Culpeper Court House. The

6 J. C. Pemberton to James A. Seddon, in OR 42, pt. 2, 1164.

7 One source, based on contemporary hearsay, had Grant alone of those present rushing toward the scene of the explosion. George Agassiz, ed., *Meade’s Headquarters, 1863-1865: Letters of Colonel Theodore Lyman from the Wilderness to Appomattox* (Boston, 1922), 217. Another source, a memoir written many years afterward by an eyewitness, had Grant sitting through the incident unperturbed. Porter, *Campaigning with Grant*, 274.

8 Report of John Maxwell, Secret Service, Confederate States, December 16, 1864, in OR 42, pt. 1, 954-5.

appointment of Hampton, a South Carolinian grandee trained in the law and an outstanding leader of cavalry, would pay rich dividends for the Army of Northern Virginia.

Between August 8 and August 11, reports arrived at City Point that several divisions of Lee's army had left the Petersburg front en route to join Early in the Shenandoah or Hood at Atlanta. By August 12, Grant determined that Lee had reinforced Early with two or three divisions of infantry and one of cavalry. To force Lee to recall these troops to the Petersburg front, Grant immediately began to issue directives for another offensive there.

On the morning of August 13, the Rockbridge Battery of light artillery on Signal Hill, Poague's artillery battalion on Proctor's Creek ridge and Confederate rams on James River below Chaffin's Bluff opened a severe cross fire on the Federals at Dutch Gap. The Water Battery at the northern terminus of the Union Bermuda Hundred lines and Federal gunboats near Jones' Neck on the James replied. Firing had almost ceased by noon, and the Confederates had failed to force the Northerners at Dutch gap to stop digging.

At about 3:00 p.m., Pemberton's mortars at the foot of New Market Heights and his howitzers about a half mile closer to the river finally opened fire on the Federal pontoon bridges at Deep Bottom. A section of Parrott rifles at Sweeney's Pottery, where the New Market Road crossed Bailey's Creek, joined in with Pemberton's heavy guns. The Secessionists failed to find the range on the pontoon bridges and soon received the attention of the Union gunboats, which commenced an accurate fire upon the Rebel lines.

On the same day, Grant finally authorized the return of his heavy artillery to the front lines from Broadway Landing, where a subordinate had diverted it on July 30. The Northern general-in-chief also received information that Matthew Butler's division of the Cavalry Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia had departed the Petersburg front for the Shenandoah. A rumor circulated that Lee's entire army, except for Pickett's division, had orders to go north.

In the Bermuda Hundred and Petersburg trenches, the armies roasted during an extraordinary spell of hot and dry weather. George Anson Bruce, a captain in the 13th New Hampshire of Stevens' brigade, Carr's division, in XVIII Corps of the Army of the James, later wrote:

The summer of 1864 was one of excessive heat. For forty-five days no rain had fallen and a tropical sun, unveiled by a single cloud, beat down upon the earth. Springs and streams had dried up and nowhere was there a green thing visible. The trees were loaded with a coating of dust that obscured their natural coloring and neutralized

everything to a dusty brown. The clayey soil was baked into a hardened mass, but its surface was covered with a fine dust that floated in the air like a mist, and, while it somewhat obscured the brightness of the sun's rays, it made the heat more oppressive and harder to bear. The hot and suffocating nights took from sleep its usual refreshment after the hard labors of the day.⁹

Used up in the Overland Campaign and during the opening assaults on Petersburg, the Army of the Potomac lacked the enthusiasm and elan necessary to turn its numerical and positional advantages into victory. Battle casualties of more than 70,000 killed, wounded and missing, as well as detachments, desertion, disease and expiring enlistments, had reduced it from about 120,000 soldiers at the beginning of May to 52,061 at the end of July despite more than 55,000 replacements, most of them poor in quality.¹⁰ The Unionists further reduced the effectiveness of their replacements by employing them in entirely new units rather than integrating them into veteran formations.¹¹ Meade, the

9 George A. Bruce, *The Twentieth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 1861-1865* (Boston, 1906), 416. As unlikely as it may seem, this officer of the 13th New Hampshire authored the history of the 20th Massachusetts.

10 Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel, eds., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 4 vols. (New York, 1884, 1888), 4:182; Return of Casualties in the Union forces, commanded by Lieut. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, from the Rapidan to the James River, in *OR* 36, pt. 1, 188; Return of Casualties in the Union Forces, June 15-30, 1864, *ibid.*, 40, pt. 1, 238; General summary of Casualties in the Union Forces operating against Richmond, VA., July 1-31, 1864, including Deep Bottom (27th-29th), "The Crater" (30th), and along the lines, *ibid.*, 268; H. W. Halleck to Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, *ibid.*, pt. 2, 47-48; Abstract from return of the Army of the Potomac, Maj. Gen. George G. Meade, U.S. Army, commanding, for the month of July, 1864, *ibid.*, pt. 3, 728. See Table 1: Federal Strength.

11 Pernicious in many other respects, the Bounty And Furlough Act passed by the Confederate Congress in 1861 encouraged enlistments in existing units and further strengthened them with the men who waited for conscription. The Union army, which did not employ conscription until July, 1863, suffered until then from a failure to strengthen existing outfits. Instead, new units formed while old ones dwindled into insignificance. Without the Bounty And Furlough Act and its successors, many Confederate regiments that remained strong to the war's end would have withered away. The constant strengthening of existing formations gave the Southerners an advantage in combat. Conscripts assigned to veteran outfits learned soldiering much more quickly than volunteers who joined green units. Conventional wisdom valued a recruit in an experienced formation as highly as three in a new one. The Bounty and Furlough Act and its successors may have accounted for much of the edge in fighting efficiency that Secessionist soldiers enjoyed over their Unionist counterparts. An Act providing for the granting of bounty and furloughs to privates and non-commissioned officers in the Provisional Army, in *OR* 5, 1016-7.

Confederate attackers had 92 percent of the combat effectiveness of Union defenders, while Federal soldiers on the offensive had only 42 percent of the combat effectiveness of

Army of the Potomac's leader, in a letter to his wife on July 23, wrote: "The army would hail an honorable peace with delight, and I do believe, if the question was left to those who do the fighting, an honorable peace would be made in a few hours."¹²

Benjamin Butler's smaller Army of the James had suffered a far lower percentage of losses during the months of May, June and July and remained a proportionately more effective fighting force than the Army of the Potomac. More than 13,000 battle casualties, in addition to desertion, disease, and expiring enlistments, had reduced it from about 40,000 men at the beginning of May to 33,816 by the end of July in spite of numerous replacements.¹³

Opposite the Federals, Lee's troops had also endured substantial losses. Detachments, desertion, disease, and about 35,000 battle casualties had reduced the components of Lee's army group at Petersburg from an initial strength of around 100,000 at the beginning of May to almost 56,795 just before Butler's division departed for Culpeper Court House.¹⁴ Lee received too few

defending Secessionists. Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still, Jr., *Why The South Lost The Civil War* (Athens GA, 1986), 472. The Army of the Potomac attacked at Antietam with 61 percent of the combat effectiveness of the Army of Northern Virginia, while the Army of Northern Virginia on the offensive at Gettysburg had 100 percent of the combat effectiveness of the defending Army of the Potomac. T. N. Dupuy, *The Evolution of Weapons and Warfare* (Indianapolis, 1980), 336.

An interesting discussion of the advantages of reinforcing existing formations occurs in Field Marshal Erich von Manstein's *Lost Victories: The War Memoirs of Hitler's Most Brilliant General* (Novato CA, 1982), 187-8, 268-9, 280. The disproportionately severe losses of newly formed units such as the Union heavy artillery regiments, the Federal equivalents of the hapless Luftwaffe Field Divisions criticized by von Manstein, earned them a category of their own in William F. Fox's *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War, 1861-1865* (Albany NY, 1889), 5-6. On June 18, 1864, at Petersburg, the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery lost more men in a single day than any other regiment in any of the war's actions. *Ibid.*, 451.

12 George Meade, *The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade, Major-General United States Army*, 2 vols. (New York, 1913), 2:215.

13 Johnson and Buel, eds., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 4:182; Return of Casualties in the Union Forces, commanded by Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, U.S. Army (compiled from nominal lists of casualties, returns &c.), May 5-31, 1864, in *OR* 36, pt. 2, 18; Return of Casualties in the Union Forces, June 15-30, 1864, *ibid.*, 40, pt. 1, 238; *ibid.*, 268; *ibid.*, pt. 2, 47-48; Abstract from returns of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina, Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, U.S. Army, commanding, for the month of July, 1864, *ibid.*, pt. 3, 737. See Table 1: Federal Strength.

14 Andrew A. Humphreys, *The Virginia Campaign of '64 and '65: the Army of the Potomac and the Army of the James*, 2 vols. (New York, 1963), 1:15-17, 141, 144; Abstract from field return of the Army of Northern Virginia, General Robert E. Lee commanding, for July 10, 1864, in *OR* 40,

replacements to permit himself the luxury of complaining about anything other than their quantity, but the Secessionist system got the most out of them by integrating them into veteran formations. Lean but healthy from a skimpy yet balanced diet, the Rebels remained in high morale and determined to keep the enemy out of Richmond. On August 6, Dr. Spencer G. Welch, the surgeon of the 13th Regiment South Carolina Volunteers in McGowan's brigade of Wilcox's division, wrote to his wife: "I am willing to do anything to whip out the Yankees."¹⁵

The Confederates enjoyed no more immunity from internal political strife than did the Federals. A pro-war but anti-Administration faction and an outright peace-at-any-price faction bedeviled the Secessionist government in the same way that their Northern counterparts plagued Lincoln's government. A bitter controversy raged throughout the South over President Davis's removal of Gen. Joseph Eggleston "Joe" Johnston from the command of the army defending Atlanta. The Confederates also suffered from material wants unknown in the North, though prices in Richmond had begun to fall and the value of Confederate currency overseas had begun to rise.

By August 13, Field's division of Anderson's Corps had received orders to prepare to tramp to Culpeper Court House. There it would join General Anderson, Kershaw's division of Anderson's Corps, and Fitzhugh Lee's and Matthew Butler's divisions of the Cavalry Corps. These four divisions would threaten Washington from the southwest. W. H. F. "Rooney" Lee's division of Rebel horsemen appears to have received orders to prepare for a ride to the Shenandoah.¹⁶ With Early's command, it would menace the Federal capital from the west. Five of the Army of Northern Virginia's nine infantry divisions and all of its cavalry would have returned to Northern Virginia. Little would

pt. 3, 761; Abstract from tri-monthly return of the Department of Richmond, Lieut. Gen. R. S. Ewell commanding, for July 31, 1864, *ibid.*, 822; Abstract from tri-monthly return of the Department of Richmond, Lieut. Gen. Richard S. Ewell commanding, August 31, 1864, and Abstract from monthly return of the Army of Northern Virginia, General Robert E. Lee, commanding, August 31, 1864, *ibid.*, 42, pt. 2, 1213-4. The components of Lee's army group included the Army of Northern Virginia, the Department of Richmond, and reinforcements from the Department of North Carolina and Southern Virginia and the Department of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. See Table 2: Confederate Strength.

15 Spencer G. Welch, *A Confederate Surgeon's Letters to his Wife* (New York, 1911), 103.

16 Byrd C. Willis Diary, August 13, 1864, Byrd C. Willis Papers, Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia.

remain but for Lee himself to move North before he would shift the seat of war into Union territory and compel Grant to abandon the siege of Petersburg.

Neither Field's foot soldiers nor Rooney Lee's cavalry departed the Petersburg front. Grant beat Lee to the punch and prevented such movements. The Unionist general-in-chief's aggressive leadership would keep the commander of the Army of Northern Virginia from crossing the Potomac in 1864 as he had in each of the two preceding years, or from dispatching forces to assist the Secessionists in Georgia, as he had the previous autumn.