



# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Volume XLVI, Battlefield Tour Edition

Chicago, Illinois

May, 1-4, 1986

## 36th Annual Battlefield Tour: The 1862 Peninsula Campaign

The Civil War Round Table has chosen Richmond and the adjacent area of the 1862 Peninsula Campaign as the sites of its 36th Annual Battlefield Tour. We will travel the length of the Peninsula from Fort Monroe to Richmond, examining all the major 1862 battle sites as well as other points of Civil War interest in the vicinity.

Our headquarters for the entire tour will be the Richmond Airport Holiday Inn, 5203 Williamsburg Road, Sandston, Virginia (804-222-6450) which is located less than a mile from the airport. When checking in, please identify yourself as a participant in The Civil War Round Table Tour and pick up a tour kit and badge, which will be distributed in the lobby of the motel.

Our chief guide, as usual, will be our close friend and life member, National Park Service Chief Research Historian, Ed Bearss. Assisting Ed this year will be Bill Mallory of Richmond, who is an authority on the battles that took place in this area; Chris Calkins, Park Historian at Petersburg who did such a fine job as one of our guides last year; and our own member, Marshall Krolick. As is our custom, we will travel in air-conditioned, wide-windowed tour buses, equipped with loud speakers, toilets, and the usual assortment of cold liquid refreshments.

On Thursday we will tour some of the sites of Richmond itself, such as the Confederate and Valentine Museums, and then journey to Berkeley Plantation (Harrison's Landing) where McClellan retreated to after the Seven Days. The speaker at dinner Thursday evening will be Robert K. Krick, Chief Historian at Fredericksburg.

On Friday, we will travel to Fort Monroe, where McClellan landed in March, 1862, and then work our way back to Richmond covering the actions at Yorktown and Williamsburg and the 1861 Battle of Big Bethel. The speaker at dinner that evening will be Ed Bearss.

Saturday will be devoted to the Seven Days Battles, from Mechanicsville to Malvern Hill. In addition, an optional tour to Colonial Williamsburg will be available on Saturday. Although The Round Table will provide lunch and transportation, the cost of admission (\$19) will be the responsibility of those attending. Because of time/reservation requirements, you must make your commitment to visit Williamsburg before April 15, 1986. (Note: the above is a change from the day and commitment date indicated on the registration form.) Saturday night will, of course, be Fun Night. Sunday morning we will depart from the 1862 campaign and review the 1864 Battles of Trevilian Station and Yellow Tavern.

### Cost of tour

\$280.00 per person, double occupancy, or \$345.00, single accommodation. (Please indicate the person with whom you wish to share a room.) Transportation to and from Richmond, Virginia is not included.

**Includes:** Motel room, all lunches and dinners (breakfasts are on your own), bus transportation in the field, tour kits and badges, group service tips, admission fees where required, refreshments on buses, and a non-refundable \$25.00 registration fee per person.

**For variations:** portions of the tour, joining enroute, individual meetings, write or phone Registrar Pat Sumner, 236 Williams, Schaumburg, Illinois 60195. Phone (312) 980-5734.

Local Civil War Round Table groups and others joining in lunches or dinners, please make reservations through the Registrar so that caterers can be notified of the number to prepare for, and so payment can be made.

### 1862 Peninsula Campaign and the Seven Days

By Terry Carr

*Editor's note: the following article originally appeared in the 25th Annual Tour Newsletter (1975)*

During mid March, 1862, the Army of the Potomac, 75,000 strong, led by General George B. McClellan moved down Chesapeake Bay to Hampton Roads and Fort Monroe. McClellan's plan called for a swift movement up the Peninsula forcing the Confederate army, commanded by General Joseph E. Johnston, back toward Richmond. Once the Federals reached the defenses around Richmond they could lay siege to the city, thereby forcing its eventual surrender. Fortunately for the South, McClellan was under the impression that his troops were greatly outnumbered by General Johnston's army. As a result the Federals moved cautiously, spending an entire month in preparing for the capture of Yorktown.

Much of McClellan's actions were indirectly caused by the movements of Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley. Lincoln feared that Jackson was planning to capture Washington, so he prevented the troops commanded by General McDowell from joining McClellan in his Peninsula Campaign. Due to the absence of these troops, McClellan ceased to be aggressive, thus giving the Confederates time to

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# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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 reinforce their army.

After the fall of Yorktown the Union army moved slowly up the Peninsula, utilizing the White House on the Pamunkey River as its base of supplies. The Pamunkey became the Union right flank and the Chickahominy the left flank. General Johnston retreated toward Richmond until he finally decided to contest McClellan's advances on May 31st at Seven Pines. The battle was hard fought but resulted in a draw. More important than the outcome was the wounding of General Johnston, which caused General Robert E. Lee to be given command of the Confederate Army. This event proved to be the turning point for the South. Lee immediately began making plans to relieve

Richmond from possible siege by McClellan. The Confederates had to assume the offensive to gain this objective, and this is exactly what Lee proposed to do.

On June 12th, General Lee sent J.E.B. Stuart with 1200 cavalymen to determine the Union positions. Stuart's famous ride around McClellan's army gave Lee the information he needed. The Federal right, Fitz-John Porter's 4th Corps, was positioned behind Beaver Dam Creek, north of the Chickahominy River, and McClellan's other three corps were on the south side of the Chickahominy. The Union right was therefore isolated and gave Lee his opportunity to strike. McClellan at this point had approximately 105,000 men and Lee, with the addition of Jackson's Valley troops, had 80,000 to 85,000. Lee proposed to leave 25,000 men to defend the Richmond lines and take the rest to attack McClellan's exposed right flank. The battles which resulted from this strategy became known as the Seven Days.

Lee's plan was for Stonewall Jackson, coming from the Valley, to move southeast several miles north of the Chickahominy, following a route which would put him behind Porter's lines. Jackson was to make contact with A.P. Hill. The latter would then move to the north side of the Chickahominy a mile north of Mechanicsville, turn right to force the Union troops out of Mechanicsville and drive toward the main Union line behind Beaver Dam Creek. Once A.P. Hill cleared Mechanicsville, D.H. Hill and Longstreet would cross the river, join the attack, and drive down the north bank, cutting McClellan off from his base of supplies at White House.

The morning of June 26th was the appointed time for the attack. By 3:00 p.m. Jackson had still not made contact with A.P. Hill. Hill decided to move on without Jackson, thus starting the offensive in motion. D.H. Hill and Longstreet moved across the river according to plan. However, A.P. Hill's assault was a complete failure as, without Jackson's troops attacking Porter from the rear, there was no hope of success against the strong Union position behind Beaver Dam Creek.

During the night of the 26th Porter learned that Stonewall Jackson had finally arrived on the Union right. Porter therefore retreated eastwardly past Gaines Mill and took a position behind Boatwain's Swamp. Late on the afternoon of the 27th, with Jackson finally in position, the assault against Porter's new line was irresistible and the Federal defense collapsed. The broken Union divisions moved across to the south side of the river, with Slocum's troops acting as rear guard. Darkness brought the fighting to a close.

On the next day, McClellan decided to move his base of supplies to Harrison's Landing on the James River. The only action on the 28th was the maneuvering by Magruder's 25,000 men who were defending the Richmond lines. General Lee, assuming McClellan would defend his White House base rather than abandon it, temporarily lost contact with him. The Confederates finally encountered the retreating Union army at Savage Station on the 29th and clashes occurred that day, and again at Glendale on the 30th. Both battles were vicious but because of the poor performance by the Confederate commanders, the Southerners could not achieve victory. By July 1st the Federal had established a strong line on Malvern Hill, which featured an excellent position for the use of artillery. The ensuing Confederate assaults were repulsed with great loss. The northerners then moved to Harrison's Landing and were safe from further attack because of the Union gun boats on the James. The

campaign of the Seven Days brought to an end the Union offensive against Richmond and with General Robert E. Lee as the new leader of the Confederate forces in Virginia, the war would last another two and one half years.

### Yorktown and Williamsburg

The Peninsula, embraced by the York and James Rivers, is a major approach to the capital of the Confederacy. Although Lincoln favored an attack on Richmond over land, he was persuaded by McClellan to use the Peninsula approach. McClellan placed his 12 divisions on ships and the first troops arrived at Ft. Monroe in March, 1862.

The Confederates, under General John Magruder, had built a line of entrenchments, spanning the Peninsula from Yorktown across to the mouth of the Warwick River, on the James. In places, the line made use of existing Revolutionary War embankments. Magruder knew the terrain and utilized it to his advantage. He had only 11,000 men to hold his entire 12 mile line. Robert E. Lee, then serving as military advisor to President Davis, initially desired to reinforce the line. General Joe Johnston wanted to abandon it and concentrate the troops in a closer defense of Richmond. President Davis became the arbitrator and backed Lee. The line was strengthened to 36,000 men with Johnston in command of the entire line. Magruder was assigned the right, Longstreet the center and D. H. Hill the left at Yorktown.

McClellan made a reconnaissance of the Yorktown line and deemed a siege preferable to direct penetration. General Fitz-John Porter was designated to be in charge of the siege operations. The rainy weather turned small streams into major barriers, but the Union troops made small advances and the minor forays gave the Union troops experience and broke the siege monotony.

Scheduling a full-scale attack for May 6, McClellan planned his major effort in the area between Yorktown and the headwaters of the Warwick River. The plan called for the Union gunboats to assist by giving supporting fire from the York River. However, around midnight of May 3, the heavy guns of the South were spiked and left behind by the withdrawing Confederates. On the morning of May 4, Yorktown was available for Union occupation.

A mile east of Williamsburg, Magruder had previously prepared another line with its main position at Fort Magruder. Johnston chose to delay the Union pursuit there. From the afternoon of May 4, until early the next day, the two sides met in the Battle of Williamsburg, which resulted in 1,600 Confederate and 2,300 Union casualties. On the following day Johnston declined to resume the action and marched to Richmond. The Siege of Yorktown and the fight at Williamsburg undoubtedly delayed the assault on Richmond and gave the Confederates the needed time to assemble and organize the forces that were to repulse McClellan from the gates of the city.

### Big Bethel

One of the early engagements of the war was the Battle of Big Bethel, fought on June 10, 1861. The Union forces were under Ebenezer Peirce and the Confederates were led by Colonel John Bankhead Magruder. As the Union troops, having marched at night from Fort Monroe, were gathering for a first light surprise attack, they became confused by the approaching gray uniforms of many early New York regiments and opened fire on fellow Northerners with musket and cannon. With the element of surprise gone, the Confederates were able to deploy and repulse the badly-

### Tour Schedule

*Variations in schedule will be announced at lunch, dinner, or on the bus. Times are approximate.*

#### Thursday, May 1, 1986

*Breakfast on your own, as on each day of the tour.*

- 8:00 a.m.—Board buses
- 8:30 a.m.—Hollywood Cemetery
- 9:45 a.m.—Museum of the Confederacy
- 10:45 a.m.—Valentine Museum
- 12:15 p.m.—Field lunch at Valentine Museum
- 1:00 p.m.—Richmond Battlefield Park Visitor Center (Chimborazo Park)
- 2:15 p.m.—Drewry's Bluff
- 3:15 p.m.—Berkeley Plantation and Lawn party
- 5:30 p.m.—Return to motel
- 6:45 p.m.—Command Post
- 7:30 p.m.—Dinner. Speaker: Robert K. Krick

#### Friday, May 2, 1986

- 8:00 a.m.—Board buses
- 9:30 a.m.—Ft. Monroe, Casement Museum and Grounds
- 11:30 a.m.—Lunch at Chamberlain Hotel
- 12:45 p.m.—Big Bethel
- 2:00 p.m.—Civil War Yorktown and (Colonial) Visitor Center
- 4:00 p.m.—Civil War Williamsburg
- 5:30 p.m.—Return to motel
- 6:30 p.m.—Command Post
- 7:30 p.m.—Dinner. Speaker: Ed Bearss

#### Saturday, May 3, 1986

- 8:00 a.m.—Board buses
- 8:15 a.m.—Mechanicsville, Chickahominy Bluffs, Beaver Dam Creek, Walnut Grove, Gaines' Mill, Watt House, Haw's Shop
- 12:00 noon—Lunch at motel
- 1:30 p.m.—Savage Station, White Oak Swamp, Glendale, Malvern Hill
- 5:00 p.m.—Return to motel
- 6:30 p.m.—Command Post. Note: evening will be informal dress.
- 7:30 p.m.—Dinner. Fun Night.

*Alternate Tour (will depend on the number of participants)*

- 8:00 a.m.—Board buses
- 9:00 a.m.—Williamsburg. The day will be spent at your leisure. If a sufficient number go to Williamsburg, a group lunch may be provided. Announcement will be made.
- 5:00 p.m.—Return to motel

#### Sunday, May 4, 1986

*Check out of motel*

- 8:00 a.m.—Board buses
- 9:30 a.m.—Trevilian Station and Yellow Tavern
- 12:30 p.m.—Lunch at motel
- 1:00 p.m.—Tour concludes

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organized Union attack. The Federals retreated in disorder and what three years later would have been considered a minor skirmish was hailed by the Confederates as a major victory. Lt. John T. Greble of the 2nd U.S. Artillery was 1 of 76 Union casualties and was the first West Point graduate to die in battle in the Civil War.

# Armchair Generalship



by Marshall D. Krolick

The literature of these campaigns is so vast that any bibliography must be very selective. Emphasis has been placed on more recent books and those more readily available, as well as on the "classics" of the subject.

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## Richmond

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# BULLETIN BOARD



**On the Tour:** Please be prompt in boarding the buses at the appropriate time each morning to allow maximum time for touring. A bus marshal will be on each bus to help you. If you plan a side excursion, join a car group, or for any other reason will not be on the bus, you must notify your bus marshal so that buses are not detained waiting for you.

## Fort Monroe

The history of Ft. Monroe began in 1607 when the English explored the area and found a channel that put them in "good comfort." In 1609 a fort was begun and named Ft. Algernourne. The earthen fort was changed over the next 119 years, but in 1749 a hurricane destroyed the fort and it was abandoned. The War of 1812 made the U.S. realize the need for an adequate coastal defense. General Simon Bernard, aide to Napoleon, designed the fort that was to be named after our 5th President, James Monroe. The construction took place over a 15 year period (1819-1834). Ft. Monroe was one of the few forts in Southern territory not captured by the Confederates during the Civil War, and served as a base of operations for the Union Army and Navy.

## Trevilian Station

On June 6, 1864, as a diversion from his movement south of the James, Grant ordered Phil Sheridan towards Charlottesville to destroy the railroad communications between Charlottesville and Richmond. The order would result in the "Trevilian Raid" that engaged an estimated 8,000 Federal and 5,000 Confederate troops and caused over 2,000 casualties. Sheridan left New Castle on June 7th and camped three miles from Trevilian Station on June 10th. Learning of Sheridan's departure, Lee ordered the divisions of Wade Hampton and Fitzhugh Lee to pursue the Federals.

On the 11th, Hampton was just west of Trevilian Station and Fitz Lee was east of Trevilian. Suspecting that the Federals would advance through the crossroads at Clayton's Store, Hampton sent the brigades of Butler and Young to block them. They encountered Devin and Merritt's brigades of Torbert's division. Fitz Lee was late in joining Hampton and his advance brigade of Wickham was attacked by Custer who had gone around Hampton. Custer slipped between the two Confederate divisions and was capturing Hampton's wagons and horses.

Hampton had to break off his engagement with Torbert and concentrate on Custer. During the confused engagement the Southerners recaptured their lost materials and captured Federal equipment and Custer's headquarters wagon. The day ended with the Federals in control of Trevilian Station.

On June 12th, the Federal forces spent the morning destroying the railroad from Louisa Court House to just west of Trevilian Station. In the early afternoon, Torbert attacked Hampton, but the latter's entrenched position enabled him to repulse the Federals with heavy loss. Sheridan was forced to return to join Grant.