

Introductory Video

"Today we are nine-months men. For twenty-seven months we have endured the dangers, the hardships, and the privations of war. Why we are not dead or wounded is not easy to explain. The battlefields of Virginia, from Fredericksburg to Petersburg, bear the testimony of the sacrifices this regiment has made, and yet our losses are comparatively small."

- John Haley, 17th Maine Volunteers

It has been three years since the first shots were fired at Fort Sumter in April 1861. Three years since any hope for a peaceful compromise on the issue of slavery and states rights had disappeared in the smoke of that spring morning in Charleston. It has been three years and nearly half a million lives that has brought General Ulysses S. Grant and General Robert E. Lee to Petersburg, Virginia in June of 1864.

Petersburg, with its five rail lines and key roads, is the supply hub to the capital of the Confederacy. Grant, having failed to defeat Lee and seize Richmond in the spring of this year, turns his attention to this city whose fortune rests on the very thing that will ensure its destruction. Both generals know that Petersburg is the lynchpin to Richmond's future.

For the next nine and-a-half months, along a 37 mile battlefront from the Confederate capital to and around Petersburg, Grant launches eight major offensives each consisting of blows at both cities and all aiming to cut off the supply routes into Petersburg. The battlefront becomes a cauldron of hissing shells, flying lead, and unending pressure of being yards if not feet away from the enemy. The landscape is stripped of its farm fields; scarred by trenches, ditches, and bombproofs; and pockmarked by the daily pounding of artillery.

On April 3, 1865, after 292 days, the last rail line into Petersburg has been cut and Lee is forced to abandon both cities. Six days later Grant and Lee bring an end to this struggle.

Today, Petersburg National Battlefield, a unit of the National Park Service, preserves this ground, these stories, that provide a window into our collective history. Though the stories in this land, that the park protects, are of a siege fought over one hundred forty years ago, their impact still shapes our lives today.

Narrated by: John Marler

Music by: Southern Horizon - *"The Water is Wide"*, *"The Cruel War"*, and *"Banishing Misfortune"* from the album *"Do They Miss Me at Home?"*