

## OPPOSING PLANS

Located only 22 miles south of Richmond, and ten miles from the James River at City Point, Petersburg was a major supply centre and main artery for the Confederate capital. Known as "The Cockade City," it had a population of about 1,600 in 1861. On the Appomattox River, vessels of about 100 tons ascended to the Port of Petersburg and those of larger size to Waltham's Landing, six miles to the south. Extensive facilities for business in the city processed and transported cotton, tobacco and metal produced in the area. With the development of transport technology during the first half of the 19th century, Petersburg became established as a railroad centre. The Lynchburg & Petersburg Railroad provided an important link with Farmville and Lynchburg in western Virginia, while the Petersburg & Weldon Railroad enabled a valuable supply line with Weldon, North Carolina, to the south. The South Side Railroad from Petersburg was also a vital resource for the Confederacy, carrying food from southwest Georgia. The section of this line to the east of the city linked Petersburg with City Point, a small port town at the confluence of the James and Appomattox rivers. Until 1862, when most of it fell into Union hands, the Norfolk & Petersburg Railroad provided a vital link with the coast. Once supplies arrived in Petersburg they were transported via the Richmond & Petersburg Railroad to the Confederate capital.

Numerous plank roads converging on Petersburg likewise added to the strategic importance of the city. These were constructed using pine and oak planks, eight feet long, one foot wide and four inches thick, laid across parallel beams slanted toward a ditch. The first all-weather route connecting the tobacco and wheat farms of southern Virginia with the market – the Boydton Plank Road – extended 73 miles southwest to Clarksville, near the North Carolina border. The Jerusalem Plank Road also ran south out of the city toward Jerusalem, on the Nottoway River. Several roads, including a turnpike, ran from Petersburg to Richmond west of the James River. By 1864, both Lee and Grant knew that if these routes were cut, Petersburg would no longer be able to provide Richmond with much needed supplies and subsistence. Without his lifeline, Lee would be forced to evacuate both cities and the Confederacy would be doomed.

## OPPOSING ARMIES

Nearly 160,000 soldiers, plus several thousand staff officers and support personnel, and tens of thousands of civilians, were involved in the Petersburg campaign, which began on June 9, 1864 and ended with the collapse of the Confederate lines on April 2, 1865. Robert E. Lee commanded the remnants of the Army of Northern Virginia, which by June 1864 amounted to only 54,751 men, consisting of 41,810 infantry, 5,520 artillery and 7,421 cavalry. Meanwhile, the much stronger Union army under Ulysses S. Grant was composed of 85,370 infantry, 8,005 artillery and 14,044 cavalry.

Lee's depleted forces consisted of the First, Second and Third corps, under generals James Longstreet, John B. Gordon and Ambrose P. Hill, respectively, plus the Fourth Corps commanded by Richard Heron Anderson and the Cavalry Corps under Wade Hampton.

Each of the first three Confederate army corps was made up of three infantry divisions commanded by a major general who was supported by a large group of staff officers including adjutants, quartermasters, commissaries and surgeons. Anderson's Fourth Corps possessed only two divisions. Hampton's cavalry corps also consisted of only two divisions, plus a brigade of horse artillery under Major R. Preston Chew. Each Confederate division consisted of four brigades of infantry each containing from four to seven regiments, plus artillery composed of five battalions comprising from three to five individual batteries.

The Confederate First Corps had returned from hard service in Tennessee to join Lee for the Wilderness campaign, only for its commander, James Longstreet, to be seriously wounded by friendly fire on May 6, 1864. Out of action until October 19, when he was placed in command of forces at Bermuda Hundred and north of the James River, his corps was under R.H. Anderson for much of the early part of the Petersburg campaign. The smallest in Lee's army, the Second Corps numbered only 8,600 effectives by the time it arrived in the Petersburg defenses under the temporary command of John B. Gordon in December 1864. This corps had been led by Jubal Early since May of that year, when Gordon received permanent command after Early's humiliating defeat at Waynesboro on March 2, 1865. Formed during the reorganization of Lee's army following Chancellorsville, A.P. Hill's Third Corps came into being on May 30, 1864, and fought in all the major battles of the Army of Northern Virginia until Hill's death on April 2, 1865. Following this, its troops were merged into the First Corps. The Fourth Corps was organized in late 1864 with R.H. Anderson in command following Longstreet's return to the First Corps in October of that year.

Under the ultimate command of U.S. Grant, the Army of the Potomac, led by George G. Meade, was composed of the II, V, VI and IX corps. Commanded by Major General Benjamin Butler, the Army of the James consisted of the X and XVIII Corps. Each of these corps was composed of three infantry divisions plus a brigade of artillery, with the exception of the IX Corps, which had a fourth division.

Commanded by W.S. Hancock from the beginning of the Petersburg campaign until November 26, 1864, when Andrew A. Humphrey took over, the II Corps had "a record of longer continuous service, a larger organization, hardest fighting, and greatest number of casualties, than any other in the Eastern armies," according to historian Francis Trevelyn Miller. Its members were identified by a flannel cloth trefoil, or three-leaf clover, worn generally on their cap tops, after the general introduction of the corps badge system to the Army of the Potomac in the spring of 1863. Created on March 3, 1862 as part of McClellan's Army of the Potomac, the V Corps was under the command of G.K. Warren throughout the entire Petersburg campaign and was distinguished by a corps badge in the shape of a Maltese cross. Recognized by a cross of St Andrew corps badge, the VI Corps was under H.G. Wright, its former commander John Sedgwick having been killed at Spotsylvania on May 9, 1864. The IX Corps was described by historian William F. Fox as, "A wandering corps, whose dead lie buried in seven states." Originally formed from troops of the Department of the South and from Burnside's Expeditionary Corps for operations in North Carolina, it had served in the Department of the Ohio for a year before returning east in April 1864 to be placed once more under Burnside. As both he and his chief of staff John G. Parke were senior to Meade, the IX Corps was placed under the direct command of Grant, and not officially made part of the Army of the Potomac. Burnside was finally relieved of command on August 14, 1864 for an unsatisfactory performance during the Petersburg mine assault. Parke replaced him in command until the end of the war. The badge for this corps was a shield crossed by anchor and cannon.

Wearing the badge of the square bastion, the X Corps was transferred from the Department of the South in April 1864, while the XVIII Corps, bearing the trefoil cross, had been organized from troops in the Department of North Carolina in December 1862. Both became part of the Army of the James when it was organized under Butler in April 1864, and both were deactivated on December 3, 1864 to create the XXIV and XXV corps. The former was created from the white troops of the X and XVIII corps, and was commanded by E.O.C. Ord from December 3 to 6, 1864; Alfred H. Terry until January 2, 1865; Charles Devens, Jr to January 15; and John Gibbon to April 27, 1865. Established on the same date, the XXV Corps was composed of the black units previously belonging to the X and XVIII corps, and was commanded by Godfrey Weitzel from December 3, 1864 to January 1, 1865; C.A. Heckman to February 2; and Weitzel again until the end of the campaign. The corps badges of these two organizations were heart and diamond (or lozenge) shaped respectively.



Photographed by Matthew Brady c. 1860, this view of Petersburg depicts a peaceful and industrious community with thriving trade and communications on the banks of the Appomattox River prior to the Civil War. (US National Archives NWDNS-111-B-84/ NWDNS-111-B-108)