

# NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## 1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield

Other Name/Site Number: VDHR Site File Number: 026-5013

## 2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Intersection of Duncan Road and Boydton Plank Road

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Petersburg vicinity

Vicinity: X

State: Virginia

County: Dinwiddie

Code: 053

Zip: 23803

## 3. CLASSIFICATION

### Ownership of Property

Private: X  
Public-Local: —  
Public-State: —  
Public-Federal: —

### Category of Property

Building(s): —  
District: X  
Site: —  
Structure: —  
Object: —

### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing  
1 buildings  
1 sites  
— structures  
— objects  
2 Total

Noncontributing  
30 buildings  
— sites  
5 structures  
— objects  
35 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 62

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

**Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield**

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**4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this \_\_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Commenting or Other Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

# Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield

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## 6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Defense Sub: battle site

Current: Recreation and Culture Sub: museum  
Landscape Sub: park

## 7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Other: Civil War Battlefield

Materials:

Foundation:

Walls:

Roof:

Other: Fortifications: earthen constructions

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**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield is a 647.4-acre property located along Boydton Plank Road (U.S. Highway 1) in northeastern Dinwiddie County, Virginia, near the city of Petersburg. The area is in the uplands near the headwater of Rohoic Creek, which drains into the Appomattox River, and Arthur Swamp, which drains into the Nottoway River. Soils consist of sand and sandy loam. Much of the site is forested with mixed hardwoods and pines. Surrounding properties are primarily residential, both light and heavy industry, and some undeveloped land.

Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield was the site of the Union army's breakthrough of the Confederate defenses of Petersburg on April 2, 1865, during the American Civil War. In the six months prior to the battle, Confederate troops occupying the area constructed earthwork fortifications through what is now Pamplin Historical Park and adjacent land. Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield includes the most significant portion of the intact battlefield (including Federal staging areas for the assault, the Confederate fortifications, military dams, and rifle pits), a historic building, four known archaeological features, and thirty-five non-contributing resources.<sup>1</sup>

**Inventory of Resources** – Resources are numbered as they appear on the map that accompanies this nomination.

Contributing:

1. Battlefield (including 44DW206; 44DW208; 44DW201; 44DW200); Site
  - 1a. Confederate Earthworks
  - 1b. Site of Confederate Winter Huts
  - 1c. Confederate Rifle Pits
  - 1d. Captured Confederate (Federal) Rifle Pits
  - 1e. Military Dams (Confederate)
  - 1f, g & h. Confederate Artillery Redans
2. Hart House (VDHR 26-163); Building

Non-contributing:

3. Pamplin Park Reproduction Earthworks; Structure
4. Pamplin Park Hart Farm Driveway; Structure
5. Pamplin Park Headquarters; Building
6. Pamplin Park Gunpowder Magazine; Building
7. Pamplin Park Battlefield Center; Building
8. Pamplin Park Education Pavilion; Building
9. Pamplin Park Operations Building; Building
10. Pamplin Park Maintenance Pole Barn; Building

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<sup>1</sup>In compliance with National Park Service policies, the proposed National Historic Landmark nomination does not include the adjacent Forts Fisher and Welch which have already been recognized by their inclusion in Petersburg National Battlefield, a unit of the National Park System.

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11. Pamplin Park Replica Winter Huts (7); Buildings
12. Pamplin Park Adventure Camp Programming Barn; Building
13. Pamplin Park Adventure Camp Log Huts (5); Buildings
14. Pamplin Park Adventure Camp Bunkhouse; Building
15. Pamplin Park Adventure Camp Kitchen; Building
16. Pamplin Park Adventure Camp Infirmary; Building
17. Gerow Ruritan Clubhouse; Building
18. Single Family Dwelling (6507 Duncan Road); Building
19. Single Family Dwelling (6513 Duncan Road); Building
20. Single Family Dwelling (7004 Church Road); Building
21. Single Family Dwelling (7010 Church Road); Building
22. Single Family Dwelling (6510 Church Road); Building
23. Pole Barn (6510 Church Road); Building
24. Pole Barn (6510 Church Road); Building
25. Hog Pens (6510 Church Road); Structure
26. Hog Pens (6510 Church Road); Structure
27. Chicken Houses (6510 Church Road); Structure

**Contributing Resources****Battlefield [Site]** (photographs #1-4, 9-13; #1 on site map [figure #1])

The site of the April 2, 1865 Breakthrough Battle encompasses 647.4 acres. Pamplin Historical Park has cleared two sections of the forest that had grown in front of the Confederate earthworks after the end of the Civil War to help enable visitors to visualize the landscape as it would have appeared in 1864-1865. Today, much of the rest of the landscape is largely forested, with a mixture of hardwoods and pines. There is also evidence of logging operations of the early twentieth century, including roads and staging areas.

When Confederate troops began erecting earthen fortifications across the Boisseau<sup>2</sup> and Hart farms, they harvested trees they found in the area, beginning with those closest to their lines. Trees were used by soldiers for the construction of *abatis*,<sup>3</sup> *fraise*,<sup>4</sup> revetment walls for defense,

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<sup>2</sup>The Boisseau house, known as Tudor Hall, still stands and is currently preserved by Pamplin Historical Park. Tudor Hall is a 2-1/2 story Federal-style frame house constructed ca. 1812. In 1864 the farm was owned by Joseph Boisseau and included 219 acres along Duncan Road. In October 1864, Confederate troops occupied the farm, and Brigadier General Samuel McGowan made the house his headquarters. The Boisseaus abandoned their home and moved to Petersburg for the duration of the campaign. The Boisseaus sold the property in 1869. Purchased by the Pamplin Foundation in 1994, the area around the house has been altered by the addition of reproduction outbuildings, barns, and field slave quarters used in educational programming. Located outside of the core area of the April 2, 1865 battle, Tudor Hall is not included within the NHL boundary (but is included within the National Register boundary).

<sup>3</sup>*Abatis* is a rampart made of felled trees placed side by side and staked down with the sharpened branches pointing toward approaches to the protected fieldwork. *Abatis* were usually positioned on the engaged side of field works within close musket range of the parapet. Like other obstacles exterior to the ditch, its purpose was to break an assaulting body of troops' momentum and hold them up under close musket fire delivered from the parapet.

<sup>4</sup>*Fraise* is an obstacle consisting of palisades projecting horizontally from the scarp or counterscarp of a temporary

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and for firewood and building materials used in the construction of winter huts. The felling of trees created a clear field of fire ahead of the Confederate position. Virtually every tree within a mile of the fortifications was cut, leaving only a few pines in nearby swamps. Union forces added to the deforestation as they constructed their own fortifications about one mile distant from the main Confederate line. The two armies left a few stumps here and there, but for the most part the men felled the trees as close to the ground as possible.

Time and the elements have had an effect on the surviving earthworks. All of the log revetments and obstacles have long since rotted away or been removed. Erosion has reduced the height of the parapets by a few inches in some places and nearly a foot in others, and has caused settling of the once six-foot deep ditch, or moat. Timbering operations taking place during the early 1900s resulted in the cutting of several small gaps through the earthen wall. Despite the changes that have occurred during the past fourteen decades, the veterans of The Breakthrough would be able to recognize most of the surviving elements of the battlefield, particularly the earthworks and houses.

The northern sector of the nominated area is also crossed by six distinct logging roads constructed in the 1930s for hauling logs from sites east and west of Duncan Road during timbering operations in the area. Some of these roads passed through cuts made in the earthworks. Depressions (generally 1-2 feet below the surrounding terrain and about 15 feet in width) where these roads existed can still be seen in now wooded areas of the battlefield, although erosion and undergrowth, has obscured them. Constructed after the period of significance, these features of the landscape do not contribute to the area nominated.

Civil War soldiers built their winter quarters approximately 500 feet behind the Confederate earthworks (#1b on site map). For the most part, these consisted of log huts about 10 x 12 feet or smaller. The South Carolinians of Brigadier General Samuel McGowan's Brigade probably constructed between 350 and 400 of these huts. North Carolinians of Brigadier General William MacRae's Brigade would have built a similar number of winter quarters along Duncan Road near the Hart House. Relatively flat areas near these winter quarters that were previously farm fields became drill and parade grounds for Confederate soldiers. None of the Confederate winter quarters survive; they would have been torn down shortly after the end of the war for their wood. However, Civil War era photographs attest to a range of structural types with an ordered spatial arrangement. Camps were typically arranged in rows and columns with a street between rows and the edges of huts relatively close.

Despite the absence of physical remains above the surface, archaeological investigations have revealed evidence of soldier huts behind the Confederate works. In 1995, Browning & Associates, Ltd., excavated an area that had been a part of a complex of winter quarters, known as the site of McGowan's Brigade Winter Huts (44DW201). This Phase III investigation

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fortification's ditch. When positioned on the scarp, it was designed to inhibit attacking troops who had already entered a work's ditch from scaling the scarp to reach the parapet. When positioned just below the crest of the counterscarp it was designed to make it more difficult for attacking troops to enter the ditch or escape from it if their attack failed. This type of obstacle was generally only applied to well developed semi-permanent works since it had to be constructed in unison with the raising of the parapet (thus increasing the amount of time and labor required to construct the parapet) and could only be employed in relatively wide and deep ditches.

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uncovered three sunken winter hut sites, the first of their kind excavated in Virginia.<sup>5</sup> The site of Hut 1 is a rectangular 10 feet EW x 12 feet NS foundation hole with evidence of a centrally placed end chimney and a probable doorway in the southwest corner. Post molds indicate an internal platform, and three stake holes possibly for roof support. Evidence for Hut 2 consists of a rectangular 6.5 feet NS x 8.0 feet EW hole with indications of an offset end chimney. There are a series of stake holes around the edges and no evidence of a door. The site of Hut 3 is a partial hut measuring 6.6 feet NS x 6.4 feet EW with evidence of an offset exterior end chimney and no evidence of internal roof supports. In addition, several trash pits were discovered near the winter huts. Other hut sites throughout the area remain to be discovered and excavated. Two of these winter hut sites have been marked near the end of the Breakthrough Trail at Pamplin Historical Park.<sup>6</sup> They are noticeable as slightly rounded mounds of earth, their features protected for future investigations by being backfilled with sand.

To help interpret the occupation of the area by Confederate soldiers and the life of those men during the winter of 1864-1865, Pamplin Historical Park built seven replica log huts (non-contributing) like those used during the Civil War (see description under "Non-Contributing Resources").

Near the historic Hart House is the site of an artillery position identified as the probable location for a Confederate Six-Gun Battery (44DW206, 44DW208) known to have been in the area. This battery likely was constructed by North Carolina soldiers who belonged to MacRae's Brigade. Aerial photographs taken by the Virginia Department of Transportation reveal the stains of the ramparts, ditch and glacis.<sup>7</sup> Archaeological excavations revealed a roughly oblong trash pit, 5.1 feet NW-SE and 4.3 feet NE-SW with gently sloping sides with a depth of 0.75 feet in the center. The ditch of the battery, estimated to be about 20 feet across and 10 feet deep, curves completely around the exterior of the ramparts. The rampart, estimated to have been 15 feet high, 20 feet thick at the base and 175 feet long, had been pushed into the ditch around 1934.<sup>8</sup>

Earthworks, Confederate (44DW200) (photographs #1-4, #1a on site map)

Approximately 1,700 linear feet of the military fortifications, constructed by Confederate soldiers during the Fall and Winter of 1864, are preserved within the boundaries of the Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield. These were part of the main line of Confederate defenses for the City of Petersburg, extending southwest as far as Hatcher's Run at Claiborne Road. Extant Civil War period earthworks are very rare, and it is exceptionally unusual that they are in

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<sup>5</sup>Lyle E. Browning, *Civil War Winter Huts, Pamplin Park Civil War Site, Dinwiddie County, Virginia Phase III Mitigation* (Midlothian, VA: Browning & Associates, Ltd., 1995; report prepared for the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, Inc.), pp. 106, 108.

<sup>6</sup>The Breakthrough Trail at Pamplin Historical Park is an interpretive trail 1.75 miles in length that follows the path of the Union assault and meanders behind the earthworks on site.

<sup>7</sup>Luke H. Boyd, Phase 2 Architectural and Historical Significance Evaluation of the Hart House (VDHR26-163) in Dinwiddie County, Virginia: A Report Prepared for the Virginia Department of Transportation, Richmond, Virginia (Richmond, VA: Virginia Commonwealth University Archaeological Research Center, 1993), 7, 10.

<sup>8</sup>L. Daniel Mouer, Douglas C. McLearen, R. Taft Kiser, Christopher P. Egghart, Luke H. Boyd, and Beverly J. Binns, *Duncan Road, An Evaluation of Archaeological Sites Along Route 670 (Duncan Road) in Dinwiddie County, Va.*, (Richmond, VA: Virginia Commonwealth University Archaeological Research Center, 1994), 40-60.

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such a high state of preservation. By the summer of 1864, military leaders on both sides re-evaluated the importance of field fortifications in military operations. The proliferation of rifled muskets and artillery increased the effective ranges of these weapons by a factor of six, shifting the advantage on the battlefield from the attacker to the defender. As the war progressed, military leaders increasingly relied on earthworks to offer their troops protection while firing at advancing enemies across prepared killing fields. On Civil War battlefields, such as at Cold Harbor (June 1-11, 1864) or Spotsylvania (May 8-19, 1864), soldiers typically occupied their positions for short periods of time, leaving little time for improving their hastily built entrenchments. The length of the Petersburg Campaign, and immobility of the armies, offered the opportunity for fortifications to be improved. Over the past fourteen decades, farmers reclaiming their fields, and other commercial and residential development in the area has destroyed miles of the Petersburg entrenchments. Fortunately, the lines at the Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield were located in the marshy land around Arthur Swamp, making it unsuitable for farming or development.<sup>9</sup> The known extant resources include the earthworks themselves, the remains of 40 rifle pits (in several instances three are connected with communication trenches) and two dams. The construction and significance of these earthworks, dams and rifle pits, along with the battlefield, make the district eligible for the National Historic Landmark under Criterion I.

The construction of earthworks embodied Lee's response to block Federal incursions further into his lines of communication and supply, notably the Boydton Plank Road and the South Side railroad. By this time, the Union had secured a line across the Weldon Railroad, necessitating off-loading Confederate supplies below Union lines and using wagons to transport them into Petersburg via the Boydton Plank Road.

Men of McGowan's South Carolina Brigade built most of these fortifications, beginning in October 1864, using techniques outlined in military manuals of the period. McGowan's aide-de-camp, Lieutenant James Fitz James Caldwell recalled that duty:

...For nearly two months, a detail, varying from two hundred to three hundred and fifty men, was constantly at work here, except on Sunday, from eight o'clock A. M., to four P. M. These works were constructed according to rule--with a ditch in front of six feet depth and eight feet width, whence all the earth for the embankment was thrown; with an embankment of six feet height, twelve feet base, and four feet terreplein; with a strong, neat revetment, and a banquette tread. These works would conceal troops marching behind them, would afford perfect protection from small arms and ordinary field artillery fire, and they could scarcely be stormed, on account of the ditch and the brush abatis in front. This was hard work; for we had to walk at least two miles over ground almost always either shoe-deep in mud or frozen hard and rough, and we had to dig up earth frequently frozen to the depth of a foot, and at other times running streams of water....Each man's turn came every third or fourth

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<sup>9</sup>Lyle E. Browning, *Civil War Winter Huts, Pamplin Park Civil War Site, Dinwiddie County, Virginia Phase III Mitigation* (Midlothian, VA: Browning & Associates, Ltd., 1995; report prepared for the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, Inc.), 113.



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day, for this work.<sup>10</sup>

On the east side of a ravine created by Arthur Swamp, the Confederates constructed an artillery *redan*.<sup>11</sup> The site is 15 feet high, measured from the bottom of the surrounding ditch which is approximately 5-6 feet deep (#1g on site map). The mound itself is a large crescent, if viewed from above, and measures approximately 50 feet across the open (defensive) side with the earth being about 12 feet thick at the base. This *redan* was probably constructed in this location because of the naturally elevated terrain and its commanding position over the surrounding ground. It would have presented a formidable obstacle to any attacking force coming across its front. (See photograph #4)

Two other Confederate artillery positions within the nominated area are clearly visible and are located along the "Breakthrough Trail" at Pamplin Historical Park. The first is a two-gun battery located east of the John Hart House and constructed between March 25 and April 2, 1865. The site is 11 feet high, measured from the bottom of the surrounding ditch which is approximately 4 feet deep (#1f on site map). The mound itself is a large crescent, if viewed from above, and measures approximately 26 feet across the open (defensive) side with the earth being about 11 feet thick at the base. The works were likely constructed by members of the Norfolk Light Artillery Blues, and protected a section of three-inch rifles during the April 2, 1865 battle.

Eight hundred yards to the northeast, a three sided work was partially constructed for a section<sup>12</sup> of 12-pounder Napoleons, also manned by members of the Norfolk Light Artillery (#1h on site map). John Walters, a member of the unit, recorded the following in his diary, "A heavy detail was made from all of the artillery on this portion of the line for the purpose of throwing up a heavy advanced work for artillery. The work as laid out will have three fronts or faces, will be forty feet thick at the base and eight feet high..."<sup>13</sup> Today, the site is 4 feet high, measured from the bottom of the surrounding ditch which is approximately 2-3 feet deep. The mound itself is a large crescent, if viewed from above, and measures approximately 92 feet across the open (defensive) side with the earth being about 11 feet thick at the base.

At another point in the works is a gap protected by a traverse measuring 6 feet wide at the narrowest point and 8 or 9 feet wide at the top and perhaps 15 feet in length. This gap, or "narrow opening," was created in the line to allow wagons and men to pass through the works. A traverse, or mound of earth which was erected to help protect this opening, is still visible. (Photographs #2 & 3)

Although there is insufficient evidence to prove definite connection with the events of April 2, 1865, a number of archaeological sites found on the property in the context of archaeological

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<sup>10</sup>J. F. J. Caldwell, *The History of a Brigade of South Carolinians* (Philadelphia: King & Baird, 1866; reprint edition, Dayton, OH: Morningside Bookshop, 1992), 245.

<sup>11</sup>A *redan* is a work with two faces that forms a salient angle along a line of earthworks.

<sup>12</sup>A section of artillery is made up of two guns, limbers, caissons, and crew.

<sup>13</sup>Wiley, Ken, ed. *Norfolk Blues: The Civil War Diary of the Norfolk Light Artillery Blues*. Shippensburg, PA: Burd Street Press, 1997.

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surveys have enhanced our understanding of the battlefield resources. Virginia Commonwealth University investigated the following sites for the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) in 1994: 44DW205, 44DW209, 44DW210 and 44DW283.<sup>14</sup> 44DW205 is believed to be a temporary site, likely from the Civil War. No sub-surface features were discovered during Phase II investigations, but the artifact assemblage included brick, clay and nails which could have been left from the construction of winter huts by the North Carolina soldiers of MacRae's Brigade. 44DW209 and 44DW210 are also believed to be Civil War camps. The findings from the Phase II excavation were unclear because excavation revealed no subsurface features and the artifact assemblage contained a mixture of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century objects. No military objects were found, but based on their location and because the area has been heavily disturbed by relic hunters, it is likely to have been a military facility. Phase I investigations of 44DW283 in 1995 revealed no subsurface features, but a small assemblage of domestic stoneware and bottle fragments led the investigators to conclude that the site was a possible trash deposit or military facility.

**Military Dams (Photograph #10; #1e on site map)**

The remains of two earthen dams are located along the streambed of Arthur Swamp. Both dams are on the course of the same branch of Arthur Swamp. One is at the point where the stream passes through the main line of earthworks and was constructed across the stream's flood plain (mostly swamp during the wet season). It measures 45 yards in length, 15 feet in thickness at the base and about 5 feet in height where the stream now flows through. The second dam is downstream about 600 yards and roughly the same dimensions.

Military dams were used to create an inundation, or collection of water in front of the works.<sup>15</sup> The resulting pond would prevent enemy soldiers from assaulting gaps in the lines left by the passage of swamps and waterways. It is not known how many such dams remain in existence but the number could not be large owing to the relatively few instances of siege warfare during the Civil War (although dams were also used at Yorktown during the Peninsula Campaign). No evidence exists that the two dams constructed across the branch of Arthur Swamp by the Confederates actually had been successful. It appears that a relatively dry winter and spring had resulted in a drying up of the branch.

**Rifle Pits (Photographs #9, 10 & 11; #1d on site map)**

Following the picket post fight of March 25, 1865, Federal troops occupied the abandoned Confederate picket line. The Federals immediately began to *reverse* their newly acquired position by shifting the earthen embankments to face the new Confederate lines along a ridge 200-300 yards in front of their main trench line. Within the NHL district, evidence of this *reversed* line begins at the main fork of Arthur Swamp and extends 100 feet along the abandoned

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<sup>14</sup>Mouer, L. Daniel, Douglas C. McLearn, R. Taft Kiser, Christopher P. Egghart, Luke H. Boyd, and Beverly J. Binns. *Duncan Road, An Evaluation of Archaeological Sites Along Route 670 (Duncan Rd.) in Dinwiddie County, VA*. Richmond, VA: Virginia Commonwealth University Archaeological Research Center, 1994. (Report prepared by VCUARC for VDOT Project 0670-026-235, C501.)

<sup>15</sup>Mahan, Dennis H., *A Treatise on Field Fortification*, (New York: John Wiley, 1861), 48-49.

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railroad grade to the northeast. A continuation of this line can also be found approximately 1300 yards to the northeast. The extant portion of this line extends 300 feet in a northeast direction, terminating at the edge of a field. This line continues on the northeastern corner of the field and extends 81 feet, terminating at the western edge of Church Road. In all cases, the remains of this *reversed* line consist of 4 foot high earthen walls measured from the bottom of the surrounding ditch, which is approximately 2-3 feet deep, and 11 feet wide at the base. Ten-foot long traverses, earthen walls that run perpendicular to the main line to prevent flanking fire, exist at intervals ranging between 16 feet and 35 feet. No extant examples of the original Federal position are known to exist within the nominated area.

The rifle pits along the new Confederate picket line measure approximately 6 x 8 x 4 feet and were sited about ten feet apart, and, in some instances, a shallow trench connected two or three pits. Erosion has filled in many of these positions and the trenches that connected them. However, 40 of these distinct holes are preserved and visible today.

From March 29, 1865 until the earthworks were overrun on April 2, McGowan's Brigade had a picket line east of the earthworks as the remainder of the Brigade moved south along the earthworks. Brigadier General James M. Lane's North Carolina Brigade was moved south into the positions formerly occupied by McGowan's men. When the attack occurred on the morning of April 2, 1865, Federal forces attacked the pickets of McGowan's brigade and the troops of Lane's brigade, who were in the winter huts built by McGowan's troops. Lieutenant Caldwell, described the rifle pits: "The picket line ran about parallel with our works, and on an average of five hundred yards from them. In some places, this line had regular entrenchments, but, as a rule, we had only strong rifle pits. The pits were about ten paces apart."<sup>16</sup>

The Hart House (Carr House; VDHR 26-163) 6915 Duncan Road [Building] (Photographs #5-8; #2 on site map)

The area around the Hart House was the scene of fighting in both October 1864 and April 1865. As was the fate of similar structures at other farms throughout south-central Virginia, most of the outbuildings and fences fell prey to the hunger for wood during the winter of 1864-1865 and were gone by the time of The Breakthrough. The Hart House has its exterior restored to its appearance in 1864-1865.

The Hart House stands on a rise immediately south of Arthur Swamp. Historically the house had some outbuildings, and in 1864 a line of earthworks was constructed, extending across the property. Around 1945 the earthworks south of the house were destroyed, but a section of earthworks remain north of the house. With its open terrain, the landscape surrounding the Hart House and the house itself have maintained their historic integrity.

The Hart House, constructed between 1859 and 1861, is a frame structure that faces southwest and consists of a story and a half over a basement. Both the full floor and the basement have four rooms. According to Joseph and Edith Lobb, the last owners of this property, the half-story remained unfinished until the 1950s.

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<sup>16</sup>Caldwell, *The History of a Brigade of South Carolinians*, 252.

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The exterior of the Hart House is constructed of plain unbeaded weatherboard with a wood shingle roof. The trim around the roofline is designed in the Gothic Revival style. The corbelled chimney has been embellished with dentils and the gable ends of the house have sawn verge boards and turned finials. Prior to the house's 2000 restoration, the foundation of the house was stucco over brick, manipulated to resemble granite blocks. During the 1940s, asbestos shingles were placed over the weatherboard, but the Lobb family removed these. A concrete block addition was also added to the north end of the house during the same decade. Fenestrations consist of two-over-two sash windows. There is a main brick hearth and flue between the two front rooms on the first floor for use with wood stoves located both there and in the basement, as no fireplace exists in the basement. The stairs to the second story and the basement are hidden behind doors. One of the walls separating two of the rooms in the basement was removed within the past fifty years. Evidence still remains of decorative stenciling on the basement plaster walls.<sup>17</sup>

It is known that outbuildings existed on the Hart Farm that by 1874 were considered to be deteriorating.<sup>18</sup> It is uncertain, however, what these structures consisted of and how they were constructed. When Joseph and Edith Lobb purchased the farm in 1950, no original outbuildings remained. Modern outbuildings, including a garage, three sheds, an aviary and a barn, were intact on the land when the Pamplin Foundation purchased the property in 2000 and were subsequently torn down.

In 2000, Marcellus Wright Cox & Smith, Architects, of Richmond, Virginia, restored the exterior of the Hart House based upon recommendations by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and a structural report by Dunbar, Milby, Williams, Pittman & Vaughan.<sup>19</sup> Paint analysis done at this time showed the original exterior treatment was plain weatherboard. The stucco was removed from the brick foundation at this time. The modern concrete addition was removed, as were the modern outbuildings on the property.

The interior of the Hart House was rehabilitated in the Spring of 2004 in order to provide storage for equipment used in "living history" programs at Pamplin Historical Park. The original plaster and lath walls were covered over with drywall in order to protect them from further damage (they had been crumbling). There were no alterations to the electrical or plumbing systems. An HVAC system was installed on the first floor which vents out an extant louvered opening in the basement wall. Furnishings (removable) were also added.

### **Non-Contributing Resources**

<sup>17</sup>Luke H. Boyd, *Phase 2 Architectural and Historical Significance Evaluation of the Hart House*, 7-12.

<sup>18</sup>When Aria Carr filed suit against John Hart in 1874, she filed a statement that "the principal value of the place consists in the Buildings, which are rapidly deteriorating & will continue to deteriorate if rented out." Carr vs. Hart 1867, Chancery Court Records, Dinwiddie County Court House; Population and Agricultural Schedules, 1870 Census, Dinwiddie County, Library of Virginia; Land Tax Books, Dinwiddie County, 1865-1870, Dinwiddie County Court House.

<sup>19</sup>Marcellus Wright Cox & Smith, Architects, and Dunbar, Milby, Williams, Pittman & Vaughan, Structural Consultants, *Restoration of House Located on the Hart Farm, Pamplin Historical Park, 6125 Boydton Plank Road, Petersburg, VA 23803* (Richmond, VA: 2000).

**Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield****Page 13**Pamplin Park Fortification Exhibit [Structure] (Photograph #15; #3 on site map)

To help the public obtain a better understanding of the configuration of the physical landscape during the war, reproduction earthworks were constructed at Pamplin Historical Park a short distance away from the actual earthworks. This interpretive device enables visitors to visualize how the earthworks would have appeared in 1865. The 180-foot-long exhibit, constructed of concrete and fiberglass, includes an artillery *redan*, infantry firing step, ditch (or moat), and reproduction obstructions (*abatis*, *fraise*, and *chevaux-de-frise*).

Hart House Driveway [Structure] (#4 on site map)

A modern gravel drive running northeastward from Duncan Road to the front of the Hart House lays over a drive that serviced the home at the time of the Civil War (and which is shown on the attached Michler map drawn in 1867).

Pamplin Park Administrative Headquarters (6619 Duncan Road) [Building] (Photograph #17; #5 on site map)

The Park Administrative Headquarters is a former private residence that dates from the 1950s. It is a one-story side-gabled brick building with an asphalt shingle roof, connected by a breezeway to a brick, two-story, two-car garage with the space above having been converted into an office. Total square footage (including the second story and basement) is nearly 3,700 square feet; the first floor occupies 2,000 square feet. The structure was rehabilitated in 1995 to serve as the administrative offices for the park.

Pamplin Park Powder Magazine [Building] (#6 on site map)

Completed in 2000, the Powder Magazine is used for storage of gunpowder used in weapons firing demonstrations. Pamplin Historical Park conducts a number of interpretive programs for its visitors, several of which involve the firing of reproduction weapons (small arms and artillery). The building is a front gabled wooden shed (13 x 24 feet) with a tin roof, and barn-like doors.

Pamplin Park Battlefield Center (6523 Duncan Road) [Building] (Photograph #16; #7 on site map)

The 10,000-square-foot Pamplin Historical Park Battlefield Interpretation Center, completed in 1994 was designed by John G. Lewis, AIA, Associated Architects of Richmond. The structure is a modern concrete and steel, one-story building of abstract design in profile representing the general appearance of ramparts. It is roughly lozenge-shaped in a partial semi-circle (viewed from above) and is 200 feet in length and 50 feet in width containing roughly 10,000 square feet of exhibits, theaters and conference space. Pamplin Park's Battlefield Center includes not only traditional exhibits of artifacts but also a theater presentation, a fiber optics battlefield map, and interactive computer touch-screen programs to tell the story of the Petersburg Campaign and of

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the April 2, 1865, breakthrough.

Pamplin Park Education Pavilion [Building] (#8 on site map)

Located behind the Battlefield Center, the Education Pavilion, completed in 2003, is a simple open sided wood frame building (64 x 36 feet), with an asphalt roof, and enclosed washrooms. It has picnic tables for school groups to eat their lunches.

Pamplin Park Operations Building (6411 Duncan Road) [Building] (Photograph #18; #9 on site map)

The Operations Building, built in 1999 is a modern front gabled building with two side gables on the rear. It is constructed of concrete over a steel frame in an L-shape configuration with an asphalt shingle roof. The structure contains offices, conference and training rooms, library, carpentry shop, staff break room and storage areas covering 9,625 square feet.

Pamplin Park Pole Barn [Building] (#10 on site map)

Completed in 2004, the Pole Barn stands behind the Pamplin Park Operations Building. This is a simple wood frame structure (20 x 40 feet) with a tin roof, and saltbox shaped front gable. This structure has a small concrete storage room (12 x 12 feet) in the center, with one door and no windows. (#10 on site map)

Pamplin Park Replica Winter Huts [7 Buildings] (#11 on site map)

To interpret the occupation of the area by Confederate soldiers, and the experience of the common Civil War soldier during the Winter of 1864-1865, Pamplin Historical Park built seven replica log huts similar to those used during the Civil War. Constructed in 2004, these replicas are based on archaeological excavations of hut sites elsewhere on the property, photographic evidence, and descriptions provided by soldiers in their letters, diaries, and memoirs. They consist primarily of log walls, chinked with mud, and brick or barrel chimneys.

Pamplin Park Civil War Adventure Camp Infrastructure Buildings [9 Buildings] (#12-16 on site map)

The following buildings, constructed on the Hart Farm property during Summer of 2004, were built to support programming for the Civil War Adventure Camp, which initiated in March 2005. These include: a two-story frame barn with wood shingle gable roof (2754 square feet); five log huts with canvas roofing (14 x 14 feet); a one-story frame bunkhouse with wood shingle gable roof (12 x 24 feet); a one-story frame cookhouse with wood shingle gable roof (12 x 24 feet); and a one-story frame infirmary building with wood shingle gable roof (12 x 32 feet).

Gerow Ruritan Club House [Building] (#17 on site map)

6501 Duncan Road is the S.T. Gerow Ruritan Club House (VDHR 26-262). Built in 1930, this

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one-story, gabled, rustic-style log building features a cinderblock foundation and an asphalt roof. Logs are saddle-notched and daubed with mortar. The building measures 1944 square feet.

Residences [5 Buildings] (18-22 on site map)

There are five residences on the proposed nomination parcel (two along Duncan Road, two along Church Road, and one a short distance west of Church Road).

-6507 Duncan Road is a 3-acre parcel containing a 1-1/2 story residence. Built in 1950 and measuring 2800 square feet, this side gabled clapboard building has two wings and an asphalt shingle roof. The largest wing has a central door, flanked by two bays on each side, and two dormers. The small wing has two bays. (#18 on site map)

-6513 Duncan Road is a 2.7-acre parcel containing a ca.1950 one-story, ranch-style brick house measuring 2100 square feet with a gabled front and an asphalt shingle roof. (#19 on site map)

-7004 Church Road is a 0.92 acre parcel that has a 900 square foot metal mobile home on a cinderblock foundation. (#20 on site map)

-7010 Church Road is a 9.31-acre parcel with a ca. 1955 one-story gabled building measuring 1200 square feet with aluminum siding and an asphalt roof. (#21 on site map)

-6510 Church is a 73.71-acre parcel containing a ca. 1980 brick 1-1/2 story residence with attached garage measuring 2500 square feet. (#22 on site map) Used as a hog farm after the period of national significance, this parcel of land retains the below listed remnants of agricultural structures associated with that usage.

Mayes Farm Pole Barn [Building] (#23 on site map)

This structure is a vinyl sided, tin roofed, 3-bay pole barn measuring 900 square feet. It is used for storage of recreational vehicles and agricultural equipment.

Mayes Farm Pole Barn [Building] (#24 on site map)

This structure was associated with the former hog farming operation and measures 57 x 20 feet. Eight one-foot diameter wood poles, sheathed in asphalt, support wooden rafters. The structure has a tin roof.

Mayes Farm Hog Pen [Structure] (#25 on site map)

This unroofed structure, used for keeping hogs, is comprised of forty-eight 8 x 8 foot pens located side by side. A 52 x 32 foot concrete pad served as a "yard" in front of every four pens.

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The total footprint of this structure measures 384 x 60 feet. Steel posts for fencing remain, but nearly all the fencing has been removed.

Mayes Farm Hog Pen [Structure] (#26 on site map)

This unroofed structure, used for keeping hogs, is comprised of thirty-two 8 x 8 foot pens located side by side. A 52 x 32 foot concrete pad served as a “yard” in front of every four pens. The total footprint of this structure measures 216 x 60 feet. Steel posts for fencing remain, but nearly all the fencing has been removed.

Mayes Farm Chicken Pen [Structure] (#27 on site map)

This structure, likely used for keeping chickens, is comprised of five tin roofed pens measuring 20 x 25 feet.



**Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield**

**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:  
Nationally: X Statewide:    Locally:   

Applicable National Register Criteria:    A X B    C X D X

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):    A    B    C    D    E    F    G

NHL Criteria:    1

NHL Criteria Exceptions:    N/A

NHL Theme:    IV. Shaping the Political Landscape 3. military institutions and activities.

Areas of Significance:    Military, Politics/Government

Period(s) of Significance:    April 2, 1865

Significant Dates:    April 2, 1865

Significant Person(s):    N/A

Cultural Affiliation:    N/A

Architect/Builder:    Confederate and Federal Armies

Historic Contexts:    VI. The Civil War: B. War in the East

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**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.****Summary Statement of Significance**

Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield, located in Dinwiddie County, Virginia, is associated with the final stages of the Petersburg Campaign, the longest military campaign of the American Civil War. On Sunday, April 2, 1865, after nearly nine months of stalemate, Union forces under the command of Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant broke through the Confederate defenses that protected the last transportation routes supplying Petersburg, Virginia, and ultimately the Confederate capital at Richmond. This battle forced Confederate General Robert E. Lee to order the evacuation of both cities that evening, and initiated a sequence of events that ultimately led to the surrender of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia one week later at Appomattox Court House, Virginia.

The Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield includes the staging areas and attack corridors used by Federal troops in their pre-dawn assault and the remnants of the fortifications defended by the Confederates (see figure #2). The nominated land also includes resources associated with the civilian and military occupation of the area including rifle pits (foxholes), military dams,<sup>20</sup> a historic building, and archaeological features. All the contributing elements played a role in the Breakthrough Battle of April 2, 1865.

Approximately 1,700 linear yards of earthworks, and other military features that were constructed by Confederate soldiers during the fall and winter of 1864-1865 as part of its defensive lines around Petersburg are extant at Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield. The construction and historical significance of these earthworks, military dams and picket posts, make the district eligible for National Historic Landmark designation under Criterion I.

**Historical Background****The Breakthrough of April 2, 1865**

Before the summer of 1864, the residents of Dinwiddie County, Virginia, had experienced only indirect impacts of the American Civil War. Unable to take Richmond by direct assault, Union commander Ulysses S. Grant settled upon a campaign to capture the transportation hub located twenty-two miles south of Richmond at Petersburg. Capturing Petersburg would sever Richmond from the rest of the Confederacy and force the evacuation of the capital. Confederate troops checked the initial Union attacks against Petersburg in June. During the following nine months, the Federals continued to extend their lines to the southwest, cutting roads and railroads leading into the city.

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<sup>20</sup>Military dams were used to create an inundation, or collection of water in front of the works. The resulting pond would prevent enemy soldiers from assaulting gaps in the lines left by the passage of swamps and waterways.

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By the fall of 1864, Grant had maneuvered his forces to control all but two of the supply lines that fed Petersburg: the Boydton Plank Road and the Southside Railroad. In October, Union and Confederate forces clashed near the home of Mrs. John Hart off Duncan Road as Grant's troops pushed toward the two remaining transportation routes. Following the repulse of the Federals, the Confederates began strengthening their defensive position by digging approximately five miles of entrenchments roughly parallel to the plank road and the railroad beyond. Brigadier General William MacRae's North Carolina brigade of Major General Henry Heth's division replaced Brigadier General James J. Archer's men within a few weeks as both sides went into winter camp.<sup>21</sup>

Fighting was desultory during the winter months, but as spring arrived the Confederates attempted to loosen the Federal grip on the city by assaulting Union positions east of Petersburg. On March 25, 1865, Lee's forces attacked Fort Stedman but were unsuccessful in carrying the position. Following the Confederate assault, Grant ordered his forces to probe for weaknesses along the Confederate defenses around Petersburg that could be exploited. U.S. Major General Horatio G. Wright, who had positioned his Sixth Army Corps opposite the Boydton Plank Road and Southside Railroad southeast of the city, ordered his men forward across what would later become the Breakthrough Battlefield area. After brief but fierce fighting, the Confederates were forced to abandon an advance line of picket posts and withdrew to a new line closer to their main entrenchments.<sup>22</sup>

Although seemingly insignificant, the fighting on March 25<sup>th</sup> had important ramifications. Not only were the new Confederate picket posts weaker than the ones captured by the Sixth Corps, they were also closer to the main Confederate lines. Union troops quickly reversed the captured picket line and occupied it as their advanced posts for the next week. This position was advantageous for future operations in the area as their new proximity to the main Confederate lines allowed them to gather intelligence about the terrain and Confederate activity in the area. Union officers observing the Confederate works suggested the works near Arthur Swamp were vulnerable to a major Federal assault.

The final offensive of the Petersburg Campaign began on March 29, 1865. Major General Philip H. Sheridan's Cavalry Corps, supported by infantry, moved southward towards Dinwiddie Courthouse toward the South Side Railroad. During the afternoon of April 1, Sheridan's cavalry and Major General Gouverneur K. Warren's infantry had crushed Major General George E. Pickett's Confederates in the Battle of Five Forks (NHL, 1960).<sup>23</sup> Sheridan opened the way for

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<sup>21</sup>Richard O'Sullivan, *55th Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1989), 80; Stuart T. Wright (comp. & ed.), *The Confederate Letters of Benjamin H. Freeman* (Hicksville, NY: Exposition Press, 1974), p. 63.

<sup>22</sup>U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. 128 Parts in 70 Volumes*. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901)(Hereafter cited as *OR*), XLII, Pt. 1, p. 264-65.

<sup>23</sup>The Battle of Five Forks, fought on April 1, 1865 served as a key building block to Ulysses S. Grant's strategy to seize the Southside Railroad. Controlling the railroad would complete Grant's overall strategy by cutting off the last remaining Confederate supply route to Petersburg, forcing the Confederates to evacuate that city and the capital at Richmond. Under the command of General Philip Sheridan, a combined cavalry and infantry force of 21,000 men assaulted 9,000-10,000 Confederate troops positioned along White Oak Road at Five Forks, southwest of Petersburg. For nearly nine months, Robert E. Lee had successfully shifted his forces from one threatened position to another, in many cases winning tactical victories by halting Federal progress. Certainly, Lee would attempt to reinforce Pickett near Five Forks and blunt the next Federal movement towards the railroad. While the Battle of Five Forks

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the Federals to reach the South Side Railroad. Grant knew that it was only a matter of time before Petersburg fell, so he sent word to Major General George G. Meade that all of the troops around the city should attack the Confederate lines on the morning of April 2. Meade forwarded these orders to General Wright, whose Sixth Corps held the Union line opposite the Hart Farm. Fighting erupted on the morning of April 2 along a mile-long front surrounding the Hart Farm and the neighboring farms of Joseph and Anne Boisseau and Robert H. Jones, and extended across the Boydton Plank Road. As shown in the 1867 Michler map, Union picket positions stretched across the ground between Arthur Swamp and Church Road, where 14,000 troops of the VI Corps lay in wait during the early morning hours of April 2, 1865.

Wright's plan of attack was to assail the Confederate defenses "at perfect silence." He decided to have his three divisions deploy in a wedge-shaped formation to punch through the Confederate fortifications (see figure #2). Brevet Major General George W. Getty's Second Division would make up the point of the wedge and had as its objective the trenches on the Boisseau Farm held by Brigadier General James H. Lane's brigade. Getty's men would move forward with their left flank anchored on Arthur Swamp. To Getty's right and slightly to his rear, Brevet Major General Frank Wheaton's First Division assumed its position. Brigadier General Truman Seymour's Third Division had its right flank on Arthur Swamp and to the left rear of Getty's left flank. This alignment resulted in Seymour's men being aimed directly at the Hart Farm. Once the wedge formation had cut the Confederate line, the Federals would then seize the Boydton Plank Road and concentrate on capturing the South Side Railroad.<sup>24</sup> Division commanders formed their units in the fields as close to the Union picket line as possible, and were to advance at the discharge of a single cannon fired from Fort Fisher.

Between 1:00 a.m. and 4:40 a.m. the Union soldiers lay exposed on the cold, wet ground waiting for the attack to begin. At one point during the deployment, Union and Confederate pickets exchanged fire in the darkness. A Union soldier remembered, "We would have enjoyed the fracas but for the fact that we couldn't give our position away by mixing in, so we lay there and took it, and when a fellow got hit, he hardly dared grunt for fear the rebels would hear him."<sup>25</sup> The inability to return the Confederate fire was "misery intensified" to the prone Federals,

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served as a setback for Lee, his orders to evacuate Petersburg and Richmond, were sent only after Federal troops broke the line at the Boisseau and Hart Farms the following morning. Of four independent Federal assaults along the Petersburg lines on April 2, all were stopped by the Confederate defenders except that of the Sixth Corps. The Federal breakthrough completed the task of cutting Lee's Petersburg lines in two; captured nearly six miles of Confederate fortifications southwest of the city, and eliminated the effectiveness of at least a third of Lee's army. For nearly a century, the Battle of Five Forks received greater importance from historians. Soon after the war, the battle's principle players began writing histories of their participation in the event. The history of the Battle of Five Forks would be written by well known officers who were fortunate enough to have survived the war: Philip Sheridan, Joshua L. Chamberlain, and George E. Pickett. No other event, however, brought as much attention to the Battle of Five Forks as the Court of Inquiry granted to General Gouverneur K. Warren in 1879. The court was called as a result of his being relieved of command by General Philip Sheridan immediately following the April 1, 1865 battle. The evidence presented at this court included testimony from many of the surviving participants of the battle, both North and South, and still forms the core of the information available about the battle. The more recent attention given to the events of April 2, 1865 have demonstrated the importance of that day in the history of the campaign and the war. For many people today, the result of the struggle that occurred at the Boisseau and Hart Farms may seem like a foregone conclusion, but for the men who fought and died here, the future had yet to be written.

<sup>24</sup>OR, XLVI, Pt. 1, 422-25.

<sup>25</sup>Barnes, Clark F. "Petersburg. A Boy's Experience in the Terrible Charge of April 2, 1865." *National Tribune*, July 27, 1883.

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particularly when the thuds and stifled outcries indicated that a Confederate bullet had found its mark. The picket fire soon died away, and the Federal soldiers resumed a tense wait for the signal to advance. According to one Federal soldier, "The night was pitchy dark. It was deadly chill and raw. The troops lay benumbed and shivering on the damp ground, anxiously awaiting the signal, the death call to many a brave and beating heart...How long it seemed waiting in the darkness and cold!"<sup>26</sup> These staging areas and a number of the Union picket posts are included in southern portions of the NHL boundaries.

Shortly after midnight, Wright's wedge-shaped assault formation began to take shape in front of Forts Fisher and Welch, both of which are preserved by the National Park Service, and adjacent to the landmark boundary.<sup>27</sup> General Wright assured General Meade, Commander of the Army of the Potomac, that his corps would "go in solid and...make the fur fly."<sup>28</sup> The lead elements of the Sixth Corps would guide their advance along a ravine that ran directly toward and through the Confederate entrenchments. Through this ravine flowed a stream called Arthur Swamp. Both the ravine and Arthur Swamp are located within the boundary of the nominated parcel.

Major General Cadmus Wilcox's and General Heth's divisions of Lieutenant General Ambrose P. Hill's Third Corps manned the portion of the Confederate line targeted by Wright with as many as 2,800 troops. Brigadier General Edward L. Thomas's Georgia Brigade was on the left, anchored at Rohoic or Indian Town Creek, Lane's Brigade held the center, and two of MacRae's regiments (the 11th and 52nd North Carolina) occupied the trenches on Lane's right. According to his after-action report, Lane's brigade was at intervals of six to ten paces per man. An unknown number of artillery pieces supported the infantrymen.<sup>29</sup>

About 4:40 a.m., on the morning of April 2, fourteen thousand men of the Sixth Corps, with fixed bayonets and uncapped muskets, moved forward across the open ground to their front. Orders had been given to advance without firing and to force their way through any *abatis* or obstructions into the Confederate's works. To achieve this, groups of ax-wielding pioneers that were assigned to hack pathways through the enemy entanglements were placed at the vanguard of each division.

The Confederate picket line was located about two hundred yards in front of the main defenses. Foxhole shaped depressions, many of which are visible today, helped to provide cover for the Confederate soldiers occupying them. Although they were not cognizant of the ensuing attack along their portion of the line, Lane's forces were convinced that they were well protected. Their

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<sup>26</sup>Stevens, Brevet Brigadier-General Hazard. "The Storming of the Lines of Petersburg By the Sixth Corps, April 2, 1865." In *Ropes*, John Codman and Dwight, Theodore F., eds. *Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts*. 15 vols. Boston: The Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, 1895-1918, 6: 409-435. Reprint, Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1989.

<sup>27</sup>In compliance with National Park Service policies, the proposed NHL nomination does not include the adjacent Forts Fisher and Welch which had already been recognized by their inclusion in Petersburg National Battlefield, a unit of the National Park System.

<sup>28</sup>*OR*, XLVI, Pt. 1, 425.

<sup>29</sup>William J. Martin, "The Eleventh North Carolina Regiment," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, XXIII (1895), p. 54; *OR*, XLVI, Pt. 1, 1285.

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position lay behind two or three rows of *abatis* which protected the works.<sup>30</sup>

Just as the Federals reached the Confederate picket line, the silence was shattered by a volley of rifle and artillery fire. One Vermont soldier recalled: “no sound broke the stillness until the enemy’s pickets, conscious of some power advancing upon them like a mighty ocean wave, with unbroken crest, delivered their fire and ran to cover in disorder.... Consternation seized the Confederates within their intrenchments [*sic*]; rushing to their guns a terrible fire of shot and shell...and canister, was soon pouring into the advancing columns, especially from the forts located to the right and left of the ravine.”<sup>31</sup> By April 2, the thick pine trees between the lines had been hewn and removed for fuel by the long-encamped troops on both sides, and many stumps had been cut a second time close to the earth. Many stumps and some loose branches and undergrowth remained. Fortunately for the Federals, most of the Confederate artillery fire passed overhead.

As they advanced, the Federals crossed a deep ditch which lay in front of one Confederate *abatis* line. Colonel Hazard Stevens remembered these obstacles: “...the enemy had placed some of their sinks [latrines] in front of the *abatis* and stakes, so that attacking troops would have to break their lines in order to avoid falling into these filthy holes.”<sup>32</sup> After getting through the lines of *abatis*, Union soldiers rushed toward the Confederate works and let loose with “one full, deep, mighty cheer.” All formations had been broken after coming through the *abatis*, and the four regiments of Lane’s brigade were putting down a heavy fire upon the attackers. However, the Confederates could not hold them back. Within minutes, the Federals climbed on top of the parapets and entered the works.

Inside the Confederate defenses, Captain Edward J. Hale, Lane's assistant adjutant general, saw men mounting the nearby earthworks: “I remarked to someone ‘why, there are the skirmishers, driven in’ & called out to know how near behind the enemy were. This was just before, or just at dawn, and it was impossible to distinguish anything more than the [flag]...& the outlines of men against the sky. We fought these people & and all the hordes that passed over, step by step.”<sup>33</sup>

A post-war account of the 10th Vermont's part in the attack describes the fighting around the large redoubt on the Hart Farm. According to this story, the regiment “struck squarely the front of a strong earthwork mounting six guns.” The men dropped into the ditch and sought ways of capturing the fort. Some soldiers climbed the parapet, while others made their way to the earthworks to either side of the redoubt. The Vermonters who moved to their left found little opposition, but those who went in the other direction were met with a volley from the Confederate infantrymen in the trenches. Having fired their rifles, the North Carolinians fought on with clubbed muskets until overwhelmed and captured. The garrison of the fort abandoned

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<sup>30</sup>*OR*, XLVI, Pt. 1, 1285.

<sup>31</sup>Charles H. Anson, “Assault on the lines of Petersburg, April 2, 1865,” *War Papers Read Before the Commanders of the State of Wisconsin, MOLLUS*, I (Milwaukee: Burdick, Armitage & Allen, 1891), 91-92.

<sup>32</sup>Hazard Stevens, “The Storming of the Lines of Petersburg by the Sixth Corps, April 2, 1865,” *Personal Narratives of the Events in the War of the Rebellion, Being Papers Read Before the Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society*, Sixth Series, Number 8 (Providence, RI: The Society, 1904), 417-18.

<sup>33</sup>Edward J. Hale to James H. Lane, June 13, 1884, in *James Henry Lane Papers*, Auburn University Archives, Auburn, AL.

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the cannon there and ran toward the two-gun battery near the Daggett house, a short distance away. Some of the Federals manned a field piece and fired it at the Confederates as they fled. From the two-gun battery came a quick barrage of shells. Lieutenant Colonel George B. Damon formed his regiment, along with some troops from other regiments of the brigade, and drove away their attackers.<sup>34</sup>

The fighting on the Hart Farm, like the rest of the Sixth Corps breakthrough, lasted no more than thirty minutes. By 5:00 a.m., the troops of the Sixth Corps had breached the Confederate defenses and had either captured the defenders or scattered them in disorder. In several instances, the Union troops turned the recently captured Confederate cannon upon the fleeing Confederates. A few Confederates fought briefly near the huts of Brigadier General Samuel McGowan's winter quarters but ultimately had to retreat toward Petersburg. With soldiers from adjacent units, Lane's troops fought a delaying action as they fell back toward the city. Gradually, the Federals drove them from their old winter quarters and back toward the Confederate forts Gregg and Whitworth.<sup>35</sup>

Most of Wright's troops turned to the left (west) after piercing Lane's line and moved along the works toward Hatcher's Run. Outnumbered and tired, the Confederates could do little to slow the Union advance. The entire Confederate line down to Hatcher's Run was soon overrun, and the remnants of the brigades there were streaming toward the Appomattox River and safety. Regrouping, the troops of the Sixth Corps turned and moved back toward Petersburg. They were joined by troops of the Twenty-Fourth and Twenty-Fifth Corps as they closed in on the city's western defenses at Fort Gregg (currently in the City of Petersburg at the northeast corner of Route 142 and Route 319 and managed by the National Park Service) and Fort Whitworth (on the grounds of the central State Hospital in Petersburg at the southeast corner of route 319 and Accomac Street) nearly two miles away. Overrunning the forts, the Federal troops, exhausted from nearly eleven hours after the first guns were fired before dawn, the fighting finally ended along the outskirts of Petersburg.<sup>36</sup>

The Sixth Corps losses on April 2 totaled 1,081 men--123 killed, 899 wounded, and 59 missing. There are no accurate figures for Confederate losses that day, but the regiments that faced the Sixth Corps reported at least 19 men killed, 27 wounded, and 1,022 captured. At least twenty-four Union officers and enlisted men won the Medal of Honor for their part in The Breakthrough.<sup>37</sup> By nightfall, the outer defenses of Petersburg had been breached, and all supply routes leading into the city from the east, west, and south, were under Federal control. As a result, Robert E. Lee ordered his army to evacuate Petersburg and the Confederate capital at Richmond. Under the cover of darkness on April 2, Lee's soldiers retreated northward across the Appomattox River and joined the rest of the Army of Northern Virginia. Lee's intent was to move his army southward, where his forces could combine with those of General Joseph E.

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34. George G. Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2 vols. (Burlington, VT: The Free Press Association, 1886), Vol. II, pp. 333-

<sup>35</sup>OR, XLVI, Pt. 1, 1285.

<sup>36</sup>OR, XLVI, Pt. 1, 901-1011; Trudeau, *The Last Citadel*, 375-90.

<sup>37</sup>OR, XLVI, Pt. 1, 586-88; A. Wilson Greene, *Breaking the Backbone of the Rebellion: The Final Battles of the Petersburg Campaign* (Mason City, IA: Savas Publishing Company, 2000), 468.

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Johnston, then engaged with Major General William T. Sherman in North Carolina. One week later, on April 9, 1865, Lee's veterans were cut off at Appomattox Courthouse where, without hope of success, he formally surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia.

During the past decade, the areas surrounding the nominated district have been slowly encroached by heavy industry and residential development. A large steel plant adjacent to the nominated area has already destroyed portions of the Peebles' Farm battlefield. Most of the northern portion of this historic district is actively preserved as part of the privately owned and operated Pamplin Historical Park. The remainder of the nominated parcel is privately owned by six other landowners.<sup>38</sup>

### Conclusion

Civil War historian Noah Andre Trudeau summed up the impact of the Petersburg Breakthrough: "[Major General Horatio G.] Wright had fulfilled his promise. His men had broken Lee's main line, isolated several brigades west of Hatcher's Run, completely cut off [Major General George E.] Pickett's infantry and Fitz Lee's cavalry near Five Forks, closed the river-to-river circle about Petersburg, and finally, in doing so, doomed Richmond."<sup>39</sup>

In 1993, the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission identified the 384 principal Civil War battles, and classified them into four groups (A, B, C, and D) according to their relative historic significance. Only 12% of those battles were ranked in the top tier (A), for having a "decisive influence on a campaign and a direct influence on the course of the war." Twenty-seven percent were ranked as B battles for having a "direct and decisive influence on their campaign," and the remaining 61% of battlefields were ranked in the lower two tiers. As an indicator of its national significance, the Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield was one of 45 Civil War battlefields ranked in the top (A) tier.<sup>40</sup>

The Breakthrough Battlefield is a large and complex site whose national significance concerns the events taking place during the early morning hours of April 2, 1865. The association with the Civil War, specifically the culmination of the Petersburg Campaign, makes the district nationally significant under Criterion I. The earthworks built by soldiers, North and South, represent fine examples of Civil War military engineering of remarkable integrity. The significance of these buildings, structures and landscapes makes the district nationally significant under Criterion 1.

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<sup>38</sup>The purchase of the largest of these privately owned parcels is currently under negotiation with the Civil War Preservation Trust. The six privately owned parcels that comprise the southern half of the nominated NHL were not available for purchase in the early 1990s when the Pamplin Foundation established their park. In 1933 the Federal fortifications located immediately south of the proposed NHL (Forts Fisher, Welch and Gregg) were donated for addition to the earlier established Petersburg National Battlefield. The 1925 legislation establishing that park directed that acquisitions focus on built fortifications rather than open battlefields. Lee A. Wallace, Jr. and Martin R. Conway, "A History of Petersburg National Battlefield," 1983, History Division, National Park Service, Washington, DC, 81-85.

<sup>39</sup>Trudeau, *The Last Citadel*, 377-8.

<sup>40</sup>U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, *Civil War Sites Advisory Commission Report on the Nation's Civil War Battlefields*. 1993.



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Dinwiddie County was the site of more than fifty battles during the American Civil War, a number exceeded by few other counties in the United States. Unfortunately, only four of these battlefields are actively preserved and interpreted. The Breakthrough Battlefield saw more than 16,000 Americans engaged in combat, nearly 2,600 of those men became casualties, and twenty-four earned the Medal of Honor. The events of April 2, 1865 that took place along Arthur Swamp have, heretofore, been somewhat overlooked by both the public and historians. Designation of Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield as a National Historic Landmark will afford recognition to this historically significant event, and will help local residents, property owners, and visitors, frame their judgments about historic preservation in a more informed manner.

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## Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register. (2003)
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

## Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other (Specify Repository):

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**Acreage of Property: 647.4

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	281550	4116920
B	18	281190	4116920
C	18	280900	4118875
D	18	280220	4116910
E	18	279930	4117450
F	18	280120	4118430
G	18	280650	4118390
H	18	280675	4118690
I	18	281245	4118600
J	18	281285	4118500
K	18	281300	4117950
L	18	281630	4117965
M	18	281900	4117230
N	18	282025	4117280
O	18	282095	4117130

## Verbal Boundary Description:

Begin at a point along the western edge of Petersburg National Battlefield's Fort Welch (UTM Point A), at the fort's westernmost bastion, representing the approximate western flank of the Federal infantry around midnight on April 2, 1865. Proceed in a straight line due west from that point approximately 1400 feet within the southwest quadrant of tax parcel 60 to the stream known as Arthur Swamp, where the stream forks into two branches (B).

At the confluence of the stream's "west" and "north" branches, continue approximately 3,500 feet westward along the north edge of the "west" branch of the stream until reaching Duncan Road (D). Where the stream meets Duncan Road, follow the eastern edge of that road in a northerly direction for approximately 5,400 feet, to a point along Duncan Road located approximately 150 feet north of a gated service road (F). At that point, follow the northern boundary of Pamplin Historical Park eastward along the southern edge of Rohoic Woods apartment complex: proceed east for 300 feet, south for 200 feet (G), east for approximately 1,400 feet, then north for approximately 1,000 feet, until reaching the western branch of a stream known as Rohoic Creek (H).

Follow the southern bank of Rohoic Creek in an east-southeasterly direction for approximately 1,600 feet to a point where the creek merges with a northwest branch of Rohoic Creek. Continue to follow the south bank of Rohoic Creek in an east-southeasterly direction for approximately 400 feet until reaching Hofheimer Way (I). Proceed along the western side of Hofheimer Way in a southeasterly direction for approximately 400 feet (J). From this point, follow the Pamplin Park

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property line in a south-southeasterly direction for 1,400 feet, where it intersects with the abandoned Southside Railway bed. Cross the Southside Railway bed, following the western boundary of tax parcel 48A, for approximately 300 feet until reaching the boundary of tax parcel 57 (K). From there proceed in an easterly direction following the southern boundary of tax parcel 48A for approximately 1000 feet until reaching the southwest corner of tax parcel 48D. Continue to proceed in an easterly direction along the southern boundary of tax parcel 48D for approximately 150 feet to a point approximately 400 feet southwest of Church Road, where the southern boundary of tax parcel 48D meets the northeast corner of tax parcel 61H and the northwest corner of tax parcel 57E (L). From there, proceed in a southeasterly direction for approximately 2500 feet along the rear property line of the modern residences (tax parcels 57E, 57E2, 57H, 57I(2), 57C(1), 57E1, 57F, 57D3, 57D, 57D1) that front on the western side of Church Road (M).

At this point proceed 400 feet along the south boundary of tax parcel 57D1 east of the western edge of Church Road, to a point across the road from the Fort Fisher property (N). Then proceed in a southeastern direction along the western side of Church Road for approximately 600 feet to the National Park Service boundary formed by the earthwork that originally linked Fort Fisher and Fort Welsh (O). At this point turn southwest following the northern edge of the earthwork, where the boundary follows in a line immediately outside (north) of the earthworks until the point of origin.

**Boundary Justification:**

The defined boundary contains the battlefield that witnessed the decisive actions that sealed the fate of the Confederacy during the final actions of the Petersburg campaign. The proposed boundary contains a contiguous area that is strongly associated with the successful advance of Federal troops from Fort Welch and Fort Fisher beginning at midnight on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1865, and culminated in the captured area immediately northwest of the breached Confederate earthworks by 5:15 a.m. later that morning. This boundary does not include areas associated with military activities before or after this five hour period, areas associated with disorganized advances of Federal troops more than one thousand feet behind the Confederate line, areas associated with subsequent "mopping up" operations to the east or west, or areas that can readily be excluded because they do not possess a high degree of historic integrity. In compliance with National Park Service policies, the proposed National Historic Landmark nomination does not include the adjacent Forts Fisher and Welch which have already been recognized by their inclusion in Petersburg National Battlefield, a unit of the National Park System.

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NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY  
July 28, 2006