



*Point of Rocks — a legacy in
Chesterfield County*

In 2013, the descendants of Rev. Strachan sold the property to Chesterfield County. The purchase was made possible by a grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program with funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund administered by the National Park Service. Matching funds were provided by the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors and the Cox family. The Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia was instrumental in the effort. Historic Point of Rocks Park is the culmination of years of work done by a dedicated group of volunteers from the Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia and the children of Thomas B. and Evelyn L. Cox, who wished to preserve his family's land and its history for future generations.



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*Tracing the steps
of our Civil War history*



**HISTORIC
POINT OF ROCKS**



“OBVIOUSLY [PRESIDENT LINCOLN] WAS THINKING OF SOMETHING WE KNEW NOT OF. HE HAD, IN FACT VISITED GENERAL GRANT AND PROBABLY KNEW WHAT WAS ABOUT TO TAKE PLACE.”

In March 1865, President Lincoln traveled to City Point to visit Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. Lincoln spent two weeks there touring the front and reviewing the troops. On March 27, Lincoln, his wife, Mary Todd, and sons Robert and Tad, visited Point of Rocks. Dr. Moses Greely Parker escorted them on a tour of the hospital, describing the visit in a letter:

“The President looked over the hospital buildings without going into them. He seemed anxious and careworn. He was very kind and genial in his manner, and was carelessly dressed, wearing a tall hat. He said but little, was very

thoughtful and evidently wanted to be alone; for he soon left us, walking to the Point of Rocks and sat down under what was called the ‘Pocahontas Oak’ (See 5 on inside map). There he sat looking toward our line of breastworks. Sometimes he placed his elbow on his knee and rested his head wearily on his hand. Obviously he was thinking of something we knew not of. He had, in fact visited General Grant and probably knew what was about to take place.”

Eighteen days later, Petersburg and Richmond had fallen, Lee had surrendered at Appomattox and President Lincoln lay in state.



Point of Rocks takes its name from a 60-foot high sandstone cliff that stands along the Appomattox River. The site was used by Native American Indians and was mentioned by Captain John Smith in his notes on Virginia. In 1642, a trading post was established there by Abraham Wood. The land was then passed to his heirs for 371 years, making Point of Rocks one of the oldest properties in the country continuously owned by one family.

During the Civil War

At the time of the Civil War, Point of Rocks was owned by the Rev. John Alexander Strachan, founder of Enon Baptist Church. The house that currently stands at Point of Rocks was built by Strachan in 1841 (1).

The first fighting at Point of Rocks took place on June 26, 1862, when a Union flotilla, including 12 gunboats and the ironclads Monitor and Galena, attempted to reach the railroad bridge over Swift Creek, located just a few miles upriver. This attack was personally ordered by President Abraham Lincoln because the destruction of the bridge would impede Confederate reinforcements and supplies coming up to Richmond from the south.

The Galena was positioned off City Point, just



to the south, while the rest of the squadron steamed upriver. Unfortunately for the Union, the sailors had no knowledge of the channel and the treacherous bars of the Appomattox River. Many of the Union ships were grounded and this, combined with the heavy fire from Confederates hidden along the banks, prevented the mission from being successful. (2)



POINT OF ROCKS

- (1) Strachan House
- (2) Actions on the river
- (3) Open-air hospital
- (4) Wooden hospital wards
- (5) Lincoln visit



Point of Rocks Hospital

After the Army of the James arrived at Bermuda Hundred in May 1864, a Union field hospital was established at Point of Rocks, consisting of tents set up in the orchard around the Strachan House (3). The tents were 50 feet long and could accommodate 40 or more patients, and the house served as the surgeon's quarters.

As the Bermuda Hundred Campaign gave way to the Siege of Petersburg, the hospital further developed into a large complex, with wooden wards grouped on the bluff in a horseshoe shape (4). The hospital was organized into divisions that distributed patients according to their diseases or injuries. Some divisions contained eight wards that were each 250 feet long, 30 feet wide and 15

feet high. These wards could accommodate 180 patients, and it is estimated that the hospital could hold more than 5,000 patients at a time.

Patients were under the care of two women pioneers in the field of medicine, Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, and Harriet Dame.



Clara Barton

At a time when women were not allowed near the battlefields, Barton and Dame saw the war first-hand up in field hospitals. Barton served as superintendent of nursing at Point of Rocks Hospital from June-August 1864. The hospital served the 10th Corps of the Army of the James. Harriet Dame joined the 2nd New Hampshire Regiment as a hospital matron in June 1861 and remained with the regiment until the end of the war. In September 1864, she was appointed matron of the hospital at Point of Rocks, which served the 18th Corps and the United States Colored Troops.

A Union cemetery also was established at Point of Rocks. It contained the remains of more than 2,500 soldiers by the end of the war (6). Among them were 850 United States Colored Troops. A handful of Confederate soldiers also were buried there. After the war, the remains of the Union soldiers were moved to City Point National Cemetery, where the wall around the cemetery was constructed of stone quarried from the bluff at Point of Rocks.

