

Early History

Point of Rocks takes its name from a 60-foot high sandstone cliff that stood 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 Wood's 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 Rev. John Alexander Strachan, founder of Enon Baptist Church. Strachan constructed a house on the property in 1841.

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.

Many of the Union ships were grounded during the attack. This, combined with the heavy fire from Confederates hidden along the banks, prevented the mission from being successful.

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. The Strachan 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 that could hold more than 3,000 patients.

Patients were under the care of two women pioneers in the field of medicine, Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, and Harriet P. Dame. At a time when women were not allowed near the battlefields, Barton and Dame saw the war close up. Barton served as superintendent of nursing at Point of Rocks Hospital from June-August 1864. 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. She was appointed matron of the 18th Corps hospital at Point of Rocks in September 1864.

Confederate soldiers taken prisoner were also treated at Point of Rocks Hospital prior to being sent to northern federal prisons. Dr. John Joseph Craven, Federal Medical Corps, Chief Medical Officer served at Point of Rocks. He was the physician, who treated Pres. Davis at Fort Monroe

and wrote the book, *The Prison Life of Jefferson Davis*, which detailed the mistreatment of President Jefferson Davis by General Nelson Miles, the Commander at Fort Monroe.

A military cemetery was established at Point of Rocks and contained the remains of 43 Confederate and 1,294 Union dead by the end of the war. After the war, the remains were removed when City Point National Cemetery was established. The rock outcropping that gave Point of Rocks its name was quarried and the stone was used to create the wall that now surrounds the City Point cemetery.

Lincoln at Point of Rocks

On March 27 1865, Lincoln, his wife Mary Todd, and sons Robert and Tad, visited Point of Rocks, along with Gen. Grant and his wife Julia. 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 said but little and 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.” 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.”

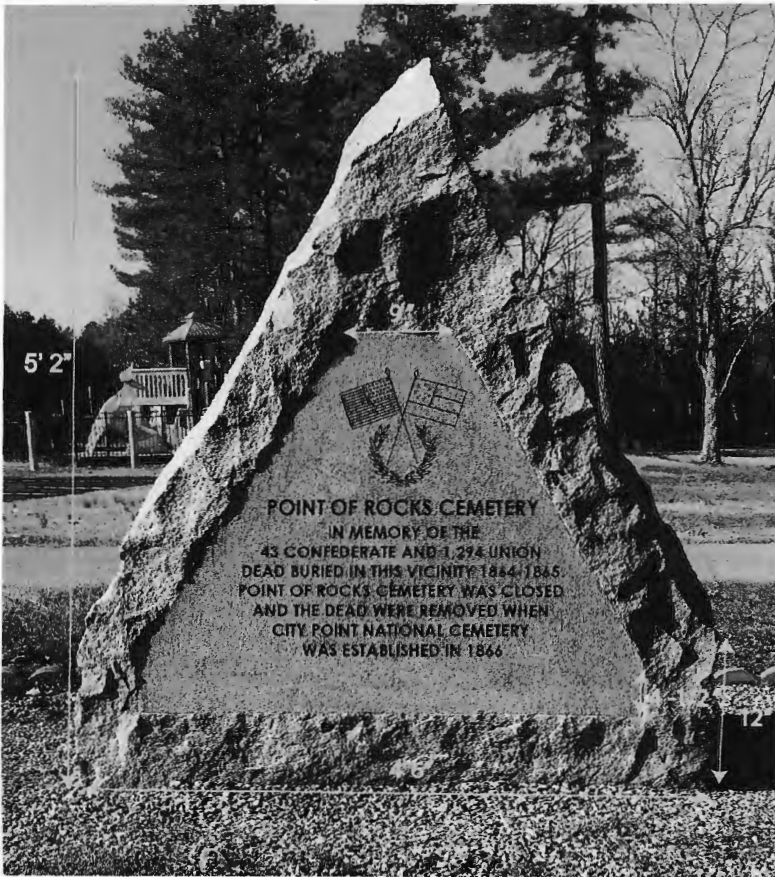
The fall of Petersburg and Richmond, Lee’s surrender at Appomattox and Lincoln’s assassination all took place within 18 days of the President’s visit to Point of Rocks.

After the war ended Federal authorities kept possession of the land at Point of Rocks. In 1866 Rev. Strachan petitioned the Department of Freedmen’s Affairs for the return of his property. In a letter dated June 22, 1865, he wrote, “I have done nothing during the rebellion that was in any way detrimental to the Federal Government. This land is my homestead, the place of my birth and a lifetime residence and has attractions for me which could not render it particularly advantageous for a freeman’s camp. I have nothing left me now but my land, all my other property have been destroyed, even including my wearing apparel and I am the husband of a delicate wife and the father of several children. I most respectfully ask that my land be at once restored to me by your order.”

Strachan’s petition was returned without action and the Federal Government remained in possession of his property until he could prove his title in U.S. Court. Strachan and his family returned to their property in 1866 and he spent the rest of his life there. The house he lived in still stands and is listed on the National, State and County Register of Historic Places.

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.

Point of Rocks Cemetery Monument



In 2016 the effort began to place a monument at Historic Point of Rocks Park to commemorate the cemetery that was located in the area during the Civil War. The cemetery was the original burial ground for 1,293 Union and 46 Confederate dead. Among the Union dead were 720 United States Colored Troops. The cemetery was the primary burial ground for the 10th and 18th Corps of the Army of the James. Confederate dead buried there represented the states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Arkansas, Alabama and Texas.

The proposed monument is made of granite cut in a triangle shape. It will have a polished face with an inscription. The sides of the monument will be rough cut. The back of the monument will list the individuals and organizations that made donations. The monument will be approximately 5 feet tall and 4 feet wide at the base.

Home States of the dead originally buried at Point of Rocks Cemetery

Alabama

North Carolina

Arkansas

Ohio

Connecticut

Pennsylvania

Illinois

Rhode Island

Indiana

South Carolina

Maine

Texas

Maryland

Vermont

Massachusetts

Virginia

New Hampshire

Washington D.C.

New Jersey

West Virginia

New York

Wisconsin

Point of Rocks Cemetery Monument Donors List (working)

Blair Perrow

Elliott Grays Chapter UDC

UDC Chesterfield Chapter

Great Granddaughters Club UDC

Great, Great, Great Granddaughters Club UDC

UDC Virginia Division

Ruth Snead

Sons of Union Veterans

Miram Cunningham

Order of the Southern Cross

Caroline Grays Chapter UDC and Pam Smith

General Robert E. Lee Camp SCV #1589

Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States

The Army of the James Camp #1864 SUVCW

54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry

Commander in Chief of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (Mark Day)

James A. Garfield Camp #1 SUVCW

CHS Military History

United Daughters of the Confederacy City Point Chapter

Department of the Chesapeake SUVCW

Irish Brigade Camp #4 SUVCW

Elizabeth Van Lew Detached Tent #1 Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War 1861-1865