

# North South Trader's CIVIL WAR

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**Inside:  
Arming a  
Rebel Scout**





**Undaunted by  
dust and disarray,  
a group of intrepid,  
historically inclined citizens  
comb through the treasures  
long hidden in some of the  
city's once-shuttered  
museums. The result?  
Splendid wartime artifacts  
come to light and the  
museums are headed for a  
renaissance.**

**by  
Ben Greenbaum**

# Petersburg: Undiscovered Museum Treasures

At the onset of the Civil War, Petersburg, Virginia, was the second largest city in the state and one of the largest in the entire of the Confederacy. Strategically located at the head of navigation on the south bank of the Appomattox River, the city had grown into a substantial tobacco, cotton, and iron manufacturing center as well as an important domestic port.

The city boasted an affluent and well-heeled population along with a significant cluster of middle-class workers. It also had one of the largest populations of free African-Americans in the South, numbering more than 3,000.

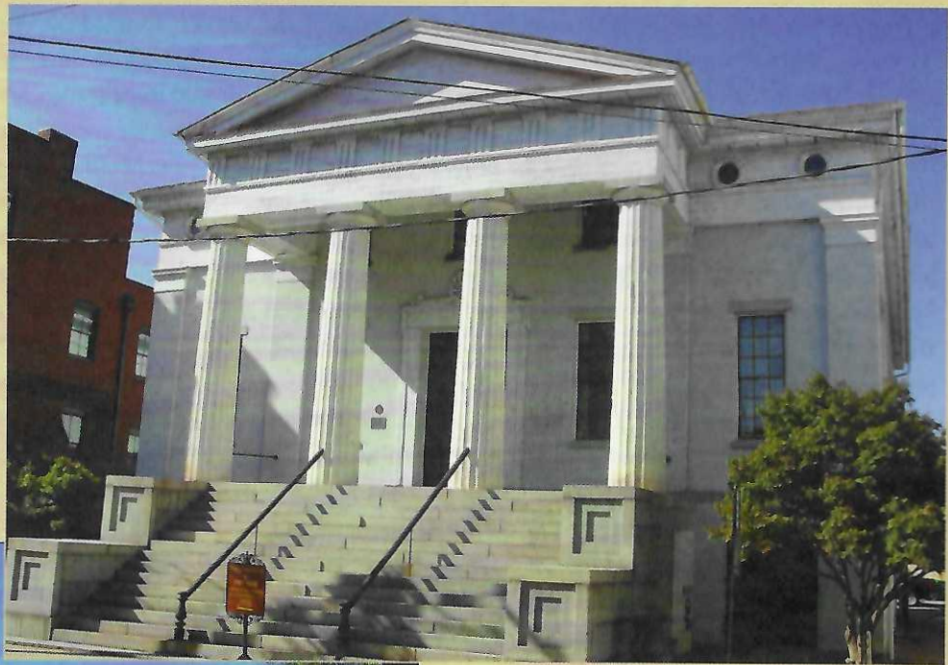
In 1864, Petersburg—at the time, only tangentially affected by the ravages of three long years of war—became an alluring target for Gen. U.S. Grant, who recognized that the city's importance to Lee's supply lines for the defense of Richmond. The Appomattox River provided Petersburg with direct and navigable access to the James River, and the city was at the crossroads for some five converging railroad lines.

Union Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, after several notable military failures, perhaps sought to vindicate himself by capturing Petersburg himself. Although Petersburg was ostensibly protected by the Confederate Dimmock Line, which stretched some ten miles and incorporated 55 redoubts, by the spring of 1864 only about 2,500 Confederate troops under Gen. Henry A. Wise defended these earthworks.

On June 9, 1864, Butler sent infantry troops of Gen. Quincy Gillmore, US Colored Troops from Gen. Edward Hink's command, and some 1,300 Union cavalrymen led by Brig. Gen. August Kautz to initiate an



*Above, a rare Jenks mule-ear carbine was found in the collections at the Centre Hill Mansion.*



Above, the Exchange Building, formerly referred to as the Siege Museum. Unless otherwise noted, all photos herein are by the author.



Left, the Centre Hill Museum is housed in a structure built in 1823 by a Revolutionary War veteran.



Above, the South Side Depot in Olde Towne Petersburg. Postwar, a room on the second floor served as an office for railroad president and former Confederate Gen. William Mahone.

assault on the strategic city. Due to Gillmore's timidity, only Kautz's cavalry troopers actually attacked. Kautz assaulted a weak and virtually unmanned point, Battery 27 or Rives' Salient.

To defend itself, Petersburg was only able to muster some 150 men serving in the reserves. Commanded by aging Mexican War hero and longtime Petersburg resident Maj. Fletcher Archer, the group was composed primarily of local teenagers, elderly men, and a few wounded but still mobile Confederate soldiers hastily recruited from city military hospitals.

Although the Southern troops sustained numerous casualties and several of their number were captured, they were able to hold off Kautz's assault long enough for Confederate Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard to bring reinforcements from Richmond, ultimately enabling the complete repulse of Kautz's men.

**T**his failure of Union forces to take Petersburg—now known as the Battle of Old Men and Young Boys—marked the beginning of the lengthy Siege of Petersburg. The multiple offensives undertaken by the Union forces against the Confederates defending Petersburg, as well as Richmond, lasted from June 9, 1864, to April 2, 1865.

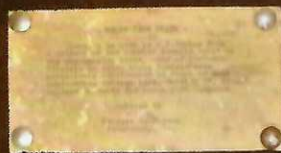
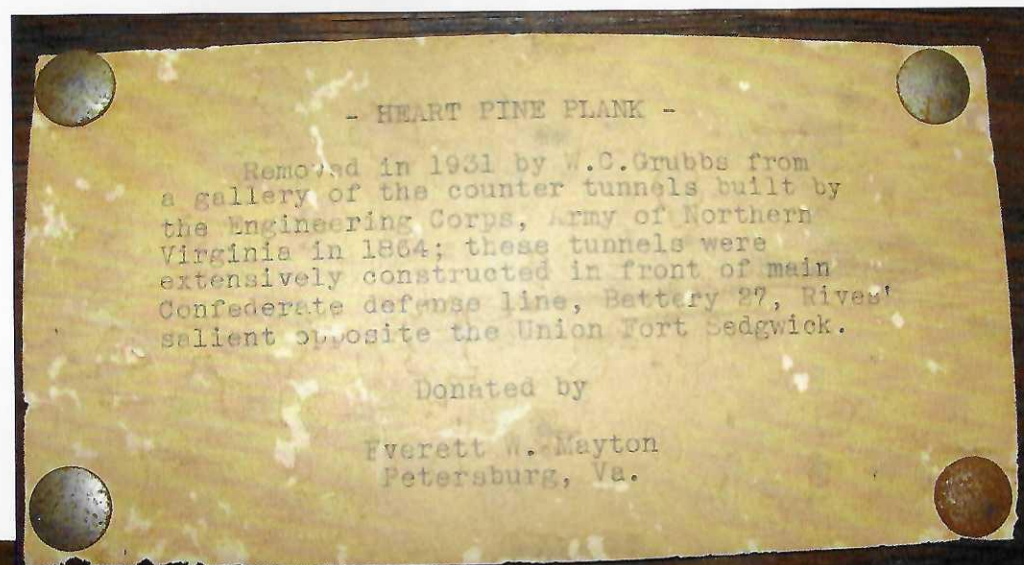
*The donor of this unusual artifact, Everett Warren Mayton (1903-1993), died in Petersburg and is interred at Blandford Cemetery. He had cause to be interested in the Civil War. His grandfather, William Robert Mayton (a.k.a. Maiton), was wounded at Gettysburg while serving with the 56th Virginia Infantry. The piece was found in the collections at Centre Hill Mansion.*

During the course of the siege some citizens fled the city but most remained. Although Union forces never succeeded in completely surrounding the city, Petersburg's citizenry had an overwhelming sense of being in a stranglehold. In July 1864, barely one month into the siege, Petersburg resident Charles Campbell wrote: "We have the same hot sun, same drought, same dust, same war circumstances, same shellings to-day as on every day."

Grant's artillery continually fired away at the Confederate earthworks, with many of these shells striking the eastern and central sections of the city. The Union mortars, including the 13-inch seacoast mortar known as the Dictator, as well as numerous other artillery pieces, fired shells into the city day and night.

In all, the campaign encompassed 292 days of combat, maneuvering, and trench warfare. By April 1865, both sides had constructed more than 100 miles of earthworks in and around Petersburg.

The armies at Petersburg were in almost constant transition, making the determination of troop strength a moving target, although it is believed that Union troop strength exceeded that of the Confederates by nearly two to one for most of the campaign. When Gen. Lee gave up the city on April 2, 1865, he evacuated more than 50,000 men out of both Richmond and Petersburg, while at the same time



Grant's combined armies tallied at least 110,000 men.

Losses are also difficult to gauge with absolute certainty, but it is believed that Union losses were approximately 50,000 total casualties, or 41%. Lee's Confederates lost an even higher percentage of men: approximately 32,000, or 46%.

The Petersburg Campaign was notable for numerous events and benchmarks, among them:

- the largest single regimental loss of the Civil War, sustained by the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery on June 18, 1864;
- construction, beginning in mid-July 1864 by members of the 48th Pennsylvania Infantry—former coal miners—of a 500'-long tunnel terminating at Elliott's Salient under the Confederate lines;
- detonation of four tons of explosives in that tunnel on July 30, 1864, creating the infamous Crater and initiating the horrific Battle of the Crater;
- shelling damage to 800 buildings in Petersburg due to constant Union artillery fire; and
- the largest combat involvement of United States Colored Troops during the Civil War in any single campaign.

Although Lee's surrender at Appomattox was nearly a week away, when the Union army finally entered Petersburg on April 3, 1865, it sounded the death knell for the Confederacy.

The city lay in ruins. An English traveler named Edward Mosely wrote to his wife in London de-

scribing the scene in town: "The city presented the most desolate appearance—public buildings, warehouses, private houses &c., clearly bore evidence of the effects of the heavy shelling. ... Not a hotel open in the place, or the slightest appearance of any business having been carried on for some time."

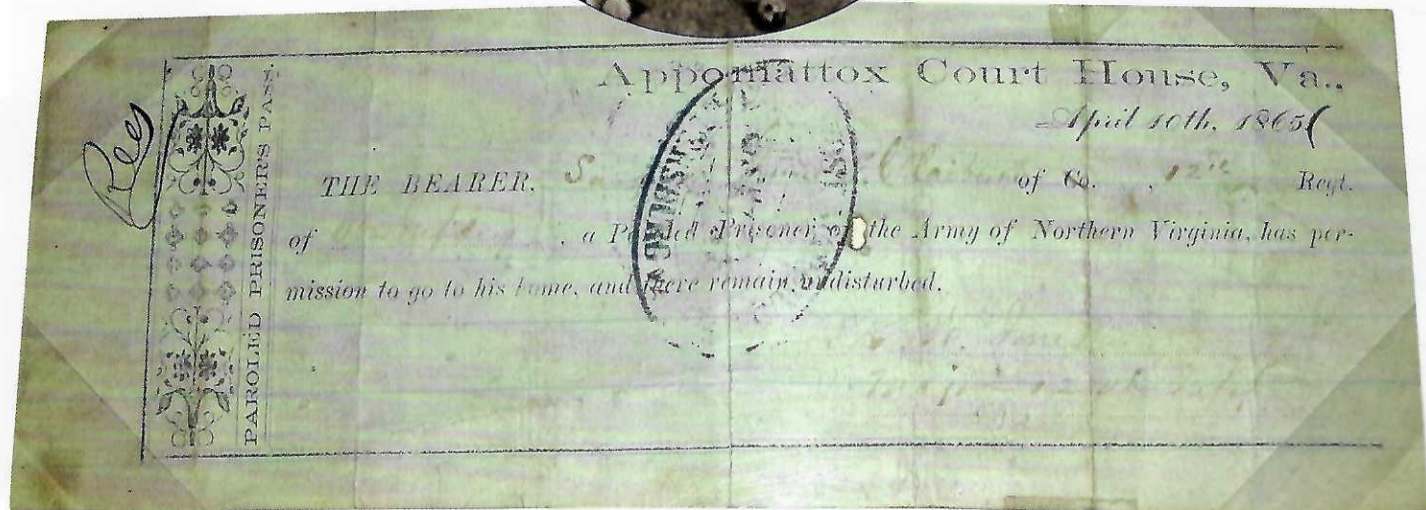
Indeed, the post-siege effects on Petersburg were devastating to the local population, who feared that their city and homes would never again attain their former level of prosperity.

Since those disastrous days of the siege, now over 150 years ago, many and varied efforts at revitalization by civic- and history-minded Petersburg residents have been undertaken in an attempt to return the city to its former significance. These endeavors met with some also lengthy periods of success, highlighted by renewed interest in the city's prominent history and architecture beginning in the 1970s.



Among the items found was the Appomattox parole of Dr. John Herbert Claiborne (seen at left in a postwar view in a historical work), who enlisted at Petersburg as a surgeon with the 12th Virginia on April 19, 1861, the very day that Lincoln called for a blockade of Southern ports, Virginia took control of Harper's Ferry, and the first fighting casualties of the war occurred in Baltimore.

An ardent secessionist and a Virginia state senator from 1857 to 1861, he was put in charge of all the hospitals in Petersburg in February 1862. He served all the way to the surrender at Appomattox. He lived until 1905 and is interred at Blandford Cemetery.



*Below, a CS-and-star marked artillery short sword was found at Centre Hill Mansion. As can only, perhaps, be legitimately said of Confederate pieces that well exhibit the manufacturing shortfalls of the south, the edged weapon is handsomely flawed. Also shown below is a rare Hale rocket found in the holdings at Centre Hill Mansion.*

*In the background image, Union soldiers are seen removing artillery pieces from the Confederate fortifications at Petersburg in April 1865. Courtesy the Library of Congress.*



Unfortunately, during the last 30 years several unexpected events have hampered revitalization efforts, including a devastating tornado that struck the wonderful Old Towne section of the city and punctuated by the closure of important businesses that left many citizens without jobs. The upshot is that a recent and deleterious fiscal shortfall forced Petersburg to close its three city-owned museums: Centre Hill Mansion, Blandford Church, and the Exchange Building or Siege Museum.

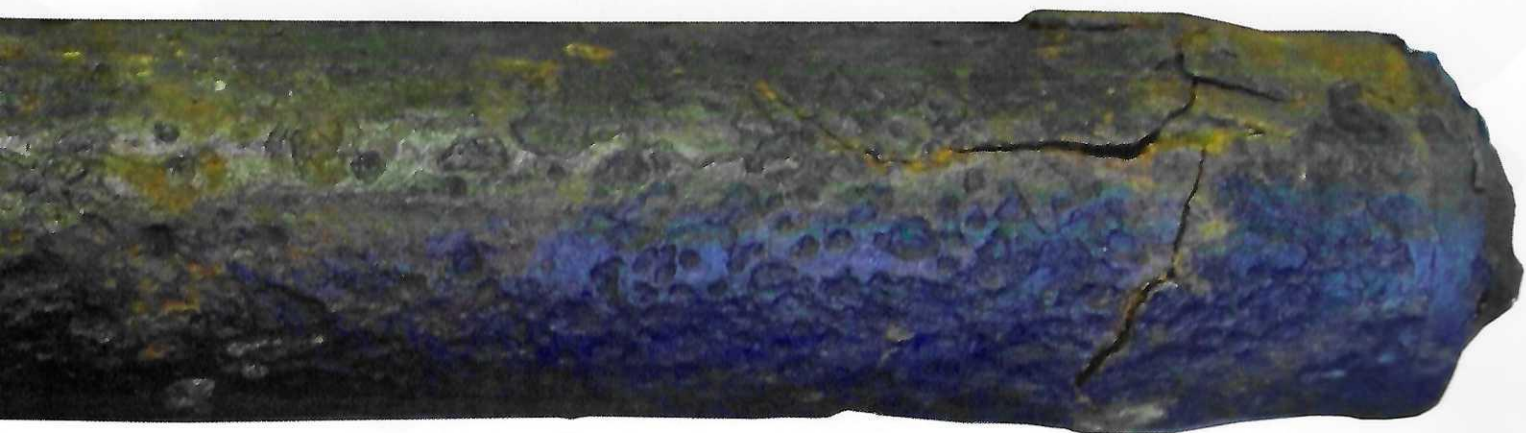
Centre Hill Mansion, an extraordinary home, was originally built in 1823 by Robert Bolling IV, a veteran of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. The house was later extensively remodeled by Robert Buckner Bolling, another prominent Petersburg resident, in the 1840s. In 1864 Confederate Lt. Gen. James Longstreet made Centre Hill his headquarters, as did Union Maj. Gen. George L. Hartsuff after the fall of Petersburg on April 3, 1865. The following day President Abraham Lincoln, his wife Mary, and her confidante and seamstress Elizabeth Keckley, a one-time enslaved resident of Petersburg, came to meet Hartsuff at Centre Hill Mansion.

Blandford Church, originally constructed in 1736, is one of the few churches whose decorative stained glass windows were completely designed and installed under the direction of Louis Comfort Tiffany. The church's 15 exquisite windows were commissioned by the Ladies' Memorial Association of Petersburg in memory of the Confederate soldiers buried at the adjacent Blandford Cemetery. From 1901 to 1912, Tiffany and his team of artists designed, fabricated, and installed the windows, which were financed by contributions from each of the Confederate states in honor of their war dead. Blandford Cemetery, one of the oldest and largest in America, serves as the final resting place for some 30,000 Confederate soldiers who lost their lives during the Siege of Petersburg.

The Exchange Building—also known as the Merchants' Exchange Building or simply the Exchange—is a historic



*Right, the group cataloging artifacts in storage encountered caches of weapons such as these.*



commercial building located at 15-19 West Bank Street in Petersburg's Old Towne. Built in 1841, the Greek Revival-style building is one of the least-altered surviving examples of a 19th century market hall and was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1971. Until about two years ago this building housed the Siege Museum, which chronicled how the Siege of Petersburg affected the lives of its residents.

Petersburg is gradually returning to a stronger fiscal position, partially through enhancing its continued allure to those interested in its rich, diverse history and its superb extant stock of 18th and 19th century buildings, many skillfully restored and some still awaiting restoration. Adding to the attractiveness are a growing group of eclectic shops and

restaurants, a thriving arts scene, and its draw as a filming location for national cinema production. The city has already hosted the filming of "Turn," "Mercy Street," Stephen Spielberg's "Lincoln," and several other films.

As part of these positive ventures, newly initiated citizen-driven projects have been launched to reopen, upgrade, and maintain Petersburg's fine historic collections. A prime mover in these

*Below, some of the personal effects of well-to-do young Petersburg resident D'Arcy Wentworth Paul, Jr. He enlisted in April 1862, was mustered into the 12th Virginia Infantry as a private, and was promoted to lieutenant the following month. His life was cut short on January 20, 1863, when he was killed by a falling tree at U.S. Ford north of the crossroads of Chancellorsville. His body was returned to Petersburg and he is interred at Blandford Cemetery.*

*His widow, Mary Anne, who died in 1900 and is interred with her husband, commemorated his passing with an inscription in his New Testament: "Carried in my husband's pocket during the war—was taken from his pocket after he was killed Jan 20 - 1863."*

*His father, D'Arcy Wentworth Paul, Sr., was was serving as president of Petersburg's city council when, on the morning of April 2, 1865, Gen. Lee told him he planned to evacuate the city. A council meeting was held at the Paul residence on Union Street and members were selected to officially turn over the government of the city to the Union forces the next day.*

*Gen. Lee  
Surrender  
letter of 9/11  
Stevens  
from Mall  
He reports  
around the  
across. You  
make your  
destroy the  
for this point  
to remove*

*Major Gen. Meade*

*J. W. Paul,  
Oct 8 1863  
Carried in my  
husband's pocket  
during the war—  
was taken from  
his pocket after  
he was killed  
Jan 20 - 1863.*





Left, found at the former Siege Museum was a rare camp trunk that opened to reveal a fold-out canvas cot.

Center, at the same repository was a note written and signed by Lee in the field in Amelia County on April 4, 1865, instructing generals Ewell and Mahone to raze the Mattoax Railroad trestle that spanned the Appomattox River. This order presaged the April 6-7, 1865, Battle of High Bridge as Lee's forces retreated after the fall of Petersburg. Southern troops set the bridge on fire after crossing it but did not destroy it, allowing Union troops to follow them toward the ultimate defeat at Appomattox Courthouse.

Dear Mr. Lee  
April 4th 1865  
9 1/2 PM  
my  
P. M. Gen  
arrived  
& received  
Ewell  
& almost  
an therefore  
parade to  
receive & march  
at 4 AM  
  
y respectfully  
your Obedt  
  
- R. Lee  
Jrw

THE  
NEW TESTAMENT  
OF OUR  
LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST,  
PRESENTED BY  
THE ORIGINAL GOSPELS  
AND WITH THE MARGINAL  
TRANSLATIONS DIRECTLY COMPARED AND REVERSED.  
  
NEW YORK  
AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY  
PUBLISHED IN THE YEAR 1824.





efforts is the Petersburg Preservation Task Force (PPTF), a group of citizen volunteers serving as the lead organization to preserve, manage, and present Petersburg's historic resources. The organization first convened in mid-2016 just as Petersburg began to deal with the severe financial crisis that forced the closing of the three city-operated museums in October of that year.

As co-owner of the Petersburg-based Perry Adams Antiques and a member of the International Society of Appraisers, I offered my services, as did my associate Bill Irvin, to assist with the inventory and conservation processes so desperately needed to catalog the thousands of artifacts. In this ongoing work we have been fortunate to have the able-bodied help of two ardently committed city employees, Tyler Beale and Michael Cormier.

The PPTF was also able to secure the city of Petersburg's permission to explore a large storage warehouse area on the west side of the historic South Side Depot, whose tall windows and distinctive cupola date to 1854.

In the course of this project we have uncovered at each location an extraordinary number of objects not previously known to exist and therefore never seen by the public—at least not in recent memory.

What follows is but a partial listing to whet the appetite.

*The South Side Depot contained numerous treasures, some of which are not related to the Civil War but are invaluable in terms of the material culture of Petersburg. These include a wagon used by a Petersburg fire company and original molds for andirons from Petersburg's historic Appomattox Iron Works and Supply Company, founded in 1872.*

The first target site for the PPTF's exploration was Centre Hill Mansion. Homing in on the expansive attic of this great antebellum house, we found the

long-forgotten collection of the defunct Petersburg Battlefield Museum Corporation. This organization, formed in the 1950s, maintained a museum of sorts at Centre Hill Mansion that folded in the 1960s. Apparently the collection of artifacts present at the time of the museum's dissolution became the property of the city of Petersburg.

Discovered in this old collection was quite an array of early battlefield pick-up items, including several artillery shells and mortar balls, a rare Hale rocket, two Hall weapons (a carbine and rifle), several swords (one obviously bullet struck), bayonets, a bowie knife, several canteens, boxes of fired and unfired bullets, a rare Jenks mule-ear carbine, a fine Confederate-marked Enfield rifled musket, Union sword belts (one with the name of a Confederate soldier attached), an identified early militia sword, what appears to

Right, a Revolutionary War-period cannon tube was found resting on the floor of the South Side Depot.

Below, the canton of a flag found in the holdings at the Siege Museum. It was presented to the Mexican War Volunteers of Petersburg by the ladies of the city, and a report of its presentation appeared in the January 12, 1847, edition of the Richmond Enquirer. Fascinatingly, it was presented directly to Fletcher Archer, who went on to play a pivotal role in Petersburg's Battle of Old Men and Young Boys during the Civil War.



be the Confederate reunion coat of Gen. William "Billy" Mahone, a rare CS-and-star marked artillery short word, a cased Civil War-period dental kit with a note inside indicating that it was given to the mother of a Confederate soldier by a Union officer, a labeled structural support board from a Confederate tunnel near Fort Mahone, and an M1849 Colt pocket model revolver.

In a closeted storage area we also discovered a large safe that had been presented to the A.P. Hill Camp of Confederate Veterans at a reunion in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1899. When we opened the door to this rather large safe, we found two large mortar balls and a 32 lb. Parrott shell.

**U**r next foray took us into the dimly lit storage vaults of the Siege Museum. We also opened long-locked closets on the second floor, which had been an exhibit space, and closely examined artifacts that had been on display but had never been fully analyzed or conserved.

Among the items found in the basement storage areas were a large group of Civil War artillery shells, boxes of fired and unfired Civil War bullets, a rare camp trunk that opened to reveal a fold-out canvas cot, and a historically significant painted canvas US flag inscribed to the "Petersburg Mexican Volunteers" by the ladies of the city.

On the second floor we found an identified period carpet bag that had previously been on display but apparently no one was aware that a note inside the bag indicated it had been carried by a Virginia infantryman. We also found a fine Confederate holster with a note identifying it to a South Carolina officer who served in Petersburg. Also among

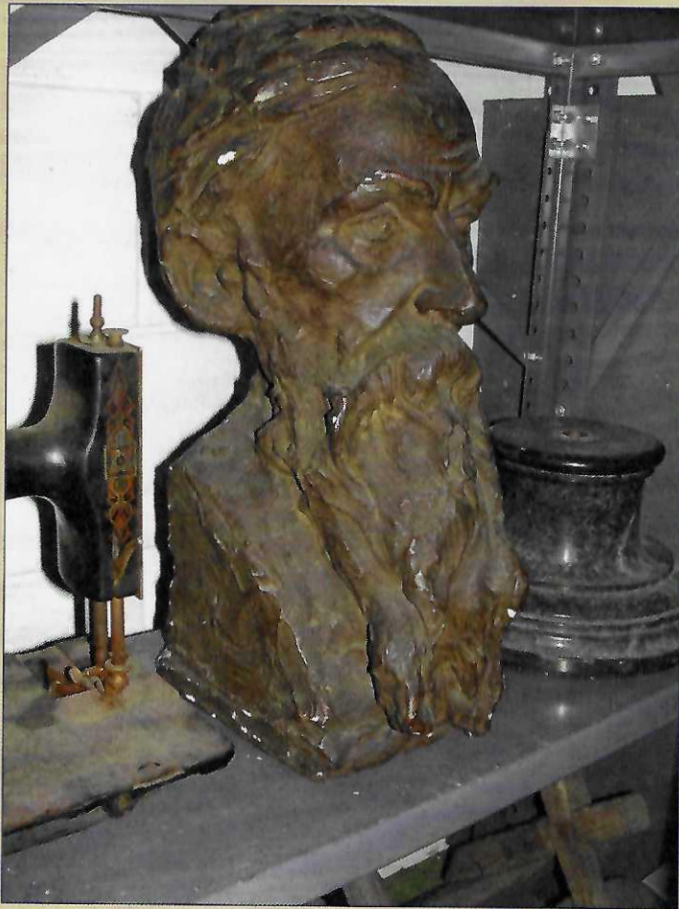
the artifacts at that site were the bullet-shattered flag staff purportedly carried by Sgt. William Crawford, flag bearer of the 12th Virginia Infantry, at the retaking of the Crater by Mahone's troops and a note written and signed by Lee in the field in Amelia County on April 4, 1865, instructing generals

Ewell and Mahone to raze the Mattoax Railroad trestle that spanned the Appomattox River.

There were numerous items on display that had never been labeled or identified in terms of provenance, including multiple artillery shells, among them a hefty, 13-inch seacoast mortar ball, a Whitworth bolt, and Hotchkiss and Read shells. There were also the touching personal ef-

**We regret that we have not room for the Petersburg Republican's graphic sketch of the interesting scenes, which took place on Saturday evening and Sunday morning last, on the occasion of the departure of Capt. F. H. Archer's company of volunteers for Old Point. On Saturday evening, the ladies of Petersburg, through their organ, Judge James H. Ghulson, presented to the Petersburg volunteers, commanded by Capt. Archer, a beautiful flag, with the Virginia coat of arms inscribed on one side, and on the other the motto "From the Ladies of Petersburg to the Petersburg Mexican Volunteers." This sacred deposit, this "talisman to cheer them in the hour of peril and inspire them in the moment of fierce and deadly conflict," was confided to the patriotic volunteers under the most touching circumstances. All the military companies of the town were present, with hundreds of ladies and gentlemen, who eagerly watched the imposing scene.**





Left, a bust of William "Billy" Mahone, whose counter-attack at the Crater resulted in a Confederate victory. Postwar he was a successful railroad executive and served as mayor of Petersburg. An impressive mausoleum houses his remains at Blandford Cemetery.

fects—gloves, hairwork watch chain and fob, pocket testament, and money purse—of well-off young Petersburg resident D'Arcy Paul, who was killed at Fredericksburg in January 1863.

In a long-locked room of the Siege Museum we carefully waded into a space crammed with storage racks, an old wardrobe, and antique bookcases. There we discovered many additional rare and previously unregistered items: several 18th and 19th century paintings, including a fine portrait of Gen. A.P. Hill, an early portrait of Gen. Mahone, an early portrait of Pocahontas attributed to famed American artist Thomas Sully, and a wonderful folk art painting of George Washington astride a horse and surrounded by uniformed Continental Army soldiers in the midst of the Valley Forge encampment.

At least one of the artifacts encountered there was known to be in the collection, but I mention it here due to its rarity and condition: an intact US Army headquarters wagon.

An additional exploration took us into the cavernous antebellum storage shed attached to the main station building of the South Side Depot, which was built in the 1850s. Inside we encountered a fascinating variety of items that had never been on display before. They included a large cast-iron Revolutionary War-period cannon tube, a mid-19th century horse-drawn wagon, and

a mid-19th century horse-drawn fire wagon or pumper that had been used by a Petersburg fire company.

There were also multiple original molds for the casting of the famed Appomattox Iron Works figural andirons in the form of George Washington, a Hessian soldier, and an owl, along with several mid-19th century trunks, a finely crafted and weighty circa 1850 safe, and numerous pieces of antebellum furniture such as chairs, sideboards, and chests.

At this juncture, the PPTF's corps of hardworking volunteers has been able to get Centre Hill Mansion up and running again, albeit on a reduced schedule. It is currently open Friday and Saturday from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM and Sunday afternoon from 1:00 to 5:00.

Blandford Church, with its inspiring Tiffany windows, is open as well and is under the aegis of the Ladies' Memorial Society. Tour hours are currently Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM and Sunday afternoon from 1:00 to 5:00.

As for the erstwhile Siege Museum—now known as the Exchange Building—it has been partially refurbished and some exhibits are open for viewing. The current schedule calls for it to be open to the public Thursday through Saturday from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM and Sunday from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM. The museum may be ultimately renamed to better represent exhibits highlighting not only Petersburg's role in the Civil War, but also its prehistory, Revolutionary War history, industrial and nautical history, and cultural history. The PPTF remains involved in this work in progress.

All are warmly invited to come visit Petersburg, one of the most historically significant municipalities in Virginia. Stroll the cobblestone streets of Old Towne and stop in at the museums to see our progress in what James Madison dubbed "the Cockade City," where history truly comes alive. NSTCW

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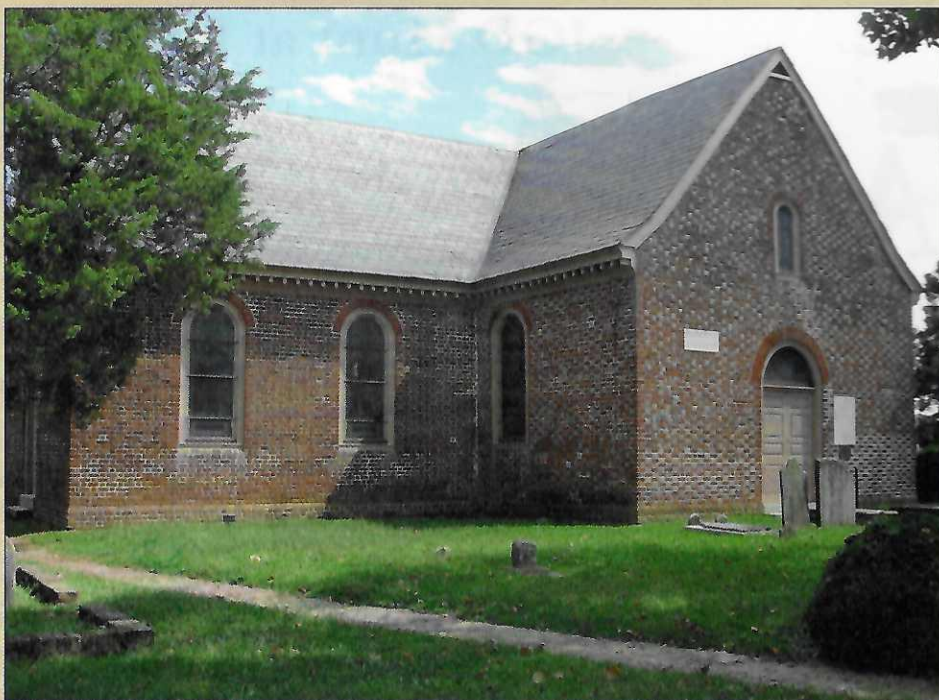
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*The author is co-owner of Perry Adams Antiques in Petersburg. He previously contributed, with Fred Schneider, "Sgt. Osborne's Limber Chest: History in a Barn, which appeared in Vol. 34 No. 6.*



Above, Blandford Church, the oldest building in Petersburg. Renowned for its Tiffany windows, it features the only stained glass window Tiffany made with a Confederate flag in it.

Below, one item that was already known of merits mention herein: a US Army headquarters wagon in astonishing condition.

