

**GENERAL JOHNSTON ABANDONS  
WARWICK-YORKTOWN DEFENSE LINE**

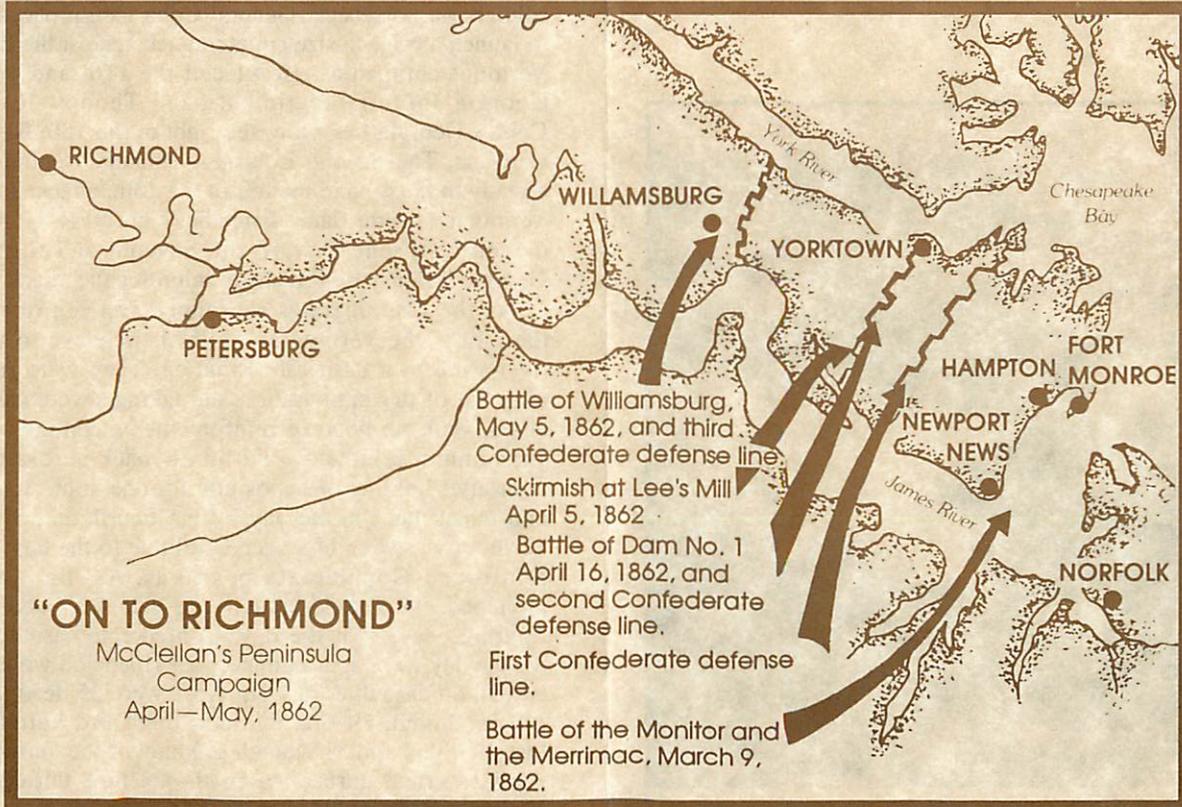
On the evening of May 3, 1862, after an unusual cannonade of the Union positions, General Johnston ordered the abandonment of the Warwick-Yorktown defense line. General McClellan had planned to open fire on Yorktown defenses with his heavy siege artillery on May 6th. The Confederates had gained a month's precious time at Yorktown to mobilize its forces for the defense of Richmond. The Union Army, in pursuit of the Confederates, caught up with the Confederate Army's wagon trains at Williamsburg about noon on May 4th. Several Confederate units already west of Williamsburg were ordered back to protect the wagon trains. What started out to be a small rearguard fight turned into a major battle at Magruder's third defense line. The Confederates succeeded in saving their trains and continued their retreat toward Richmond on the evening of May 5th. The Battle of Williamsburg was costly for both sides, with a combined loss of over 3,000 soldiers either killed or wounded. After the battle, both armies would continue their slow march up the Peninsula and position themselves for the coming confrontation outside of Richmond.

**HISTORY IS WAITING FOR YOU AT  
NEWPORT NEWS PARK**

Today's park visitor can step back into history and observe an extensive and unique system of original earthen fortifications by walking the nature trails originating at the park Discovery Center. The majority of these fortifications are in an excellent state of preservation, some reaching a height of 20 feet. Dam No.1 is now covered by Lee Hall Reservoir, but both ends of the dam are still visible from the foot bridge that crosses the reservoir. Located entirely in Newport News Park, the Dam No.1 Battlefield site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and commemorated by a bronze plaque and granite monument.

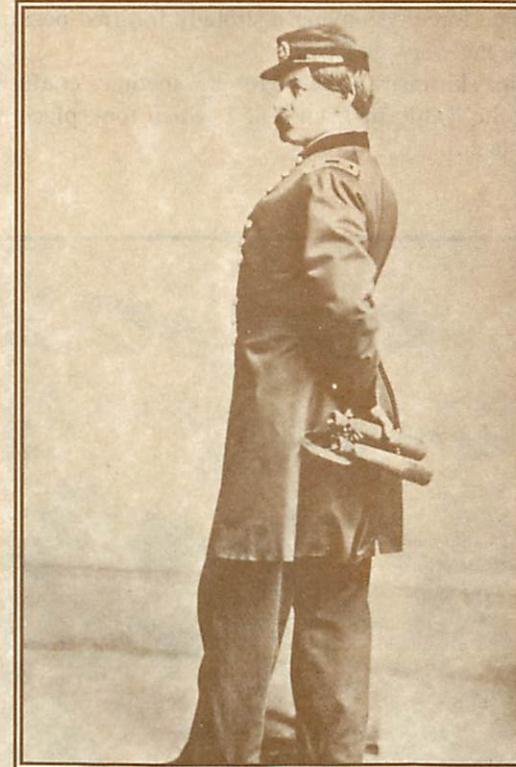
The Discovery Center has on exhibit the original Battle of Dam No. 1 mural painted by Mr. Sidney King and many artifacts excavated from the battle site and surrounding troop encampments.

*For more information, contact  
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**The Battle  
Of  
Dam No. 1**

APRIL 16, 1862



*Major General George B. McClellan (U.S.)*

**NEWPORT NEWS PARK  
NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA**

**The Battle  
Of  
Dam No. 1**

APRIL 16, 1862



*Major General John Bankhead Magruder (C.S.)*

**NEWPORT NEWS PARK  
NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA**

### THE FIRST MAJOR BATTLE OF THE PENINSULA CAMPAIGN

If a visitor to Newport News Park could turn back the pages of history to April 16, 1862, the serenity of the park as it is known today would echo violently with the awesome thunder of artillery and the crack of Confederate and Union musketry. It is here, in the midst of the South's largest municipal park, that the first major battle of the 1862 Peninsula Campaign-The Battle of Dam No.1, was fought. The battle gets its name from one of three earthen dams constructed on the upper Warwick River by Confederate forces in late 1861 and early 1862. This little-publicized but bloody action is also referred to as the Battle of Lee's Mill and The Battle of Burnt Chimneys.

### McCLELLAN'S ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE: THE CONFEDERATE CAPITOL

The Union's strategic objectives for the Peninsula Campaign were for Major General George B. McClellan, Commanding General of the Army of the Potomac, to defeat or capture the Confederate forces on the Peninsula, open the James River, push on to Richmond, and capture the Confederate capitol before it could be fortified and reinforced.

The Confederate strategy was for Confederate Major General John Bankhead Magruder, Commanding General of the Army of the Peninsula, to delay any attacking Union force moving up the Peninsula towards Richmond. Delaying the Union Army on the lower Peninsula would give General Joseph E. Johnston time to move men and materials for the defense of the Confederate capitol at Richmond. General Magruder would carry out this mission by directing his engineers to construct three lines of earthen defense works across the lower Peninsula utilizing every river and swamp to their advantage.

The second defense line, sometimes referred to as the Warwick-Yorktown line, stretched twelve miles across the Peninsula from Mulberry Island (now Fort Eustis) to Yorktown. The Battle of Dam No.1 was fought approximately midway on this line.

### THE WARWICK-YORKTOWN DEFENSE LINE HALTS THE UNION ADVANCE

During the rainy month of March 1862, as the Confederates continued the work of fortifying the Warwick-Yorktown defense line, General McClellan was landing the first units of his 100,000 man army at Fort Monroe.

On April 4, 1862, the Union army began its "On To Richmond" march with two separate columns marching up the Peninsula. McClellan, using an old, inaccurate map and receiving poor intelligence information, was unaware of the true course of the Warwick River and the heavily fortified positions stretching across the Peninsula.

On April 5th, the lead units of Major General Erasmus D. Keyes's IV Corps were halted at Lee's Mill (now covered by Lee Hall Reservoir). This unexpected halt was due to artillery and rifle fire from a large Confederate force occupying a strongly fortified position across the Warwick River.

This skirmish at Lee's Mill is sometimes confused with the Battle of Dam No. 1 which took place 11 days later.

### McCLELLAN TESTS CONFEDERATE STRENGTH

After the skirmish at Lee's Mill, General McClellan decided to halt his army's march and re-evaluate his situation. It would be a month before the Union army would again be "On to Richmond." General McClellan decided to lay siege to the Warwick-Yorktown defense line with an awesome array of over 100 rifled cannons and mortars, some capable of firing 200-pound shells several miles.

The Confederates, expecting a major assault at any time, continued working to fortify their positions. No assaulting columns were ever assembled except for the action at Dam No.1 on April 16, 1862. McClellan's intentions at Dam No.1 were only to test the strength of the Confederate forces at a supposed weak spot in the defense line and force them to discontinue any further strengthening of their batteries and rifle pits.

### THE BATTLE OF DAM NO. 1

On the morning of April 16, 1862 at approximately 8:30 a.m., Thaddeus P. Mott's Third New York Artillery Battery opened fire on the Confederate positions at Dam No.1. This battery, along with other Union artillery batteries, continued to shell the Confederate positions throughout the day. At approximately 3:00 p.m., four companies (192 men) of the Third Vermont Infantry advanced from the woods toward the Confederate positions across the river. Wading through the waist-deep river channel below the dam, the "Green Mountain Boys" drove the surprised Confederates from the first line of rifle pits along the water's edge. The Confederate unit at the center of action and taking the brunt of this vigorous attack was the 15th North Carolina Infantry whose Colonel, William McKinney, was killed while rallying his soldiers. The death of Colonel McKinney and an unauthorized order to fall back caused confusion along the entire line. General Howell Cobb, Commander of the Second Brigade, Second Division, immediately reorganized and stabilized the line as he rode among the soldiers on horseback. General Cobb then proceeded to launch a brigade size counterattack against the four Vermont companies. He placed the 11th and 16th Georgia Infantry Regiments and Thomas R. R. Cobb's Georgia Legion to the right of the 15th North Carolina. The Second Louisiana Infantry Regiment, already in position to the left of the 15th, attacked the Vermonters' right flank. Brigadier General R. H. Anderson also sent forward the Seventh and Eighth Georgia Infantry Regiments to reinforce the attack.

As the Confederates regrouped and reinforced their line, the Vermonters with their backs to the river were in a desperate situation. They were running out of dry ammunition and taking severe casualties. With no hope of reinforcements coming, the Vermonters reluctantly withdrew back across the river after holding their position for one hour. A second attack later in the day by the Fourth and Sixth Vermont was even less successful due to the heavily reinforced Confederate positions. As night approached, the second assault was called off and all fighting ceased for the day. Confederate casualties for the day were approximately 75 killed and wounded. Union casualties at Dam No.1 were 35 dead and 121 wounded. Of this number, the Third Vermont lost 23 killed and 51 wounded. Many of the Vermont soldiers killed during the battle are now buried at Yorktown National Cemetery, Yorktown, Virginia.



*Sidney King portrayal of the Battle of Dam No.1*