

HISTORIC HANOVER COUNTY VIRGINIA



Welcome to
Hanover County



Just a few miles north of Richmond lies Hanover County, a special place steeped in a long and colorful history. This guide is designed to help visitors experience the people, places and, events in Hanover County that helped to shape Virginia—and America.



Throughout the county, dozens of state historic markers and numerous historic sites have been preserved to tell the stories of the earliest Native American inhabitants, the rich colonial history, the struggle for religious freedom, and the

fight for independence from the British crown. Three National Park sites and two county parks commemorate battles of the Civil War. Choose one or sample them all. Hanover has something for the casual visitor or the most serious student of American history.

Continued on back cover

Visiting Hanover County

Visitor centers located in Ashland and at the Cold Harbor battlefield, eight miles east of Mechanicsville, are open year round. The visitor's center at Bass Pro Shops in Winding Brook is open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. These centers are staffed to provide assistance with orientation and trip planning. In the spring and summer months special events like Civil War encampments and National Park Service ranger guided tours help to make Hanover's history come alive.



For more information

If there is time to plan ahead consult the following web sites for information on special itineraries and events that will help make a visit to Hanover and the Richmond Region even more rewarding.

Civil War

www.civilwartraveler.com
www.nps.gov/rich

Visitor Information

www.visit.richmond.com • 1-888-RICHMOND
www.co.hanover.va.us





Foundations of Liberty



Hundreds of years before the English set foot in what is now Virginia, indigenous people of the Chickahominy, Pamunkey, and Totopotomoy tribes inhabited this place and the rivers and other natural landmarks now honor their names. Jamestown brought English explorers to the region including Capt. John Smith whose capture by the great Chief Powhatan in Hanover led to his legendary escape led by Pocahontas.

Hanover County, chartered in 1720, quickly became well populated and emerged as a bustling center of commerce and trade, particularly tobacco. Local farmers used slave labor to plant, harvest, and transport this king crop to port at Hanover on the Pamunkey River for shipment around the world. Evidence of this prosperity can be seen by driving along Hanover's country roads and witnessing many of the grand plantation homes built during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Hanover also proved to be fertile ground for cultivating an emerging nation's revolutionary spirit. In the late 1730's Hanover County became a center of a powerful religious movement called the "Great Awakening." This movement challenged traditional notions

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of an established, state church. All other religions and religious denominations, except for the Church of England, were discouraged, suppressed, and harassed. Pressure from Hanover Dissenters forced the Governor's Council in Williamsburg to license four "reading houses" in 1743. Three of these places of worship were located in Hanover.

The Reverend Samuel Davies, a newly ordained 23-year-old Presbyterian preacher arrived from Pennsylvania in 1747 to minister to these fledgling congregations. Davies became the first non-Anglican minister licensed to preach in Virginia. During his 12 year tenure, Davies led the pioneering effort to educate the black slave, recruit soldiers for Governor Dinwiddie to fight the French and Indian War, and minister to a young Patrick Henry and his mother at the Polegreen (www.historicpolegreen.org) meeting house. It has been said he had no peer in the pulpit in the Colonies. Before his death Henry credited Davies with "teaching



Left: Jefferson's Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. Above: Samuel Davies Above Right: The site of Polegreen church is celebrated by a frame reconstruction and historic markers.



Foundations of Liberty



me what an orator should be.” By 1800, Baptists, Methodists, and Quakers worshipped in Hanover.

Most Americans cherish our first freedoms, but it is likely that few are familiar with the events in Hanover that secured this right by influencing Virginia’s government to adopt

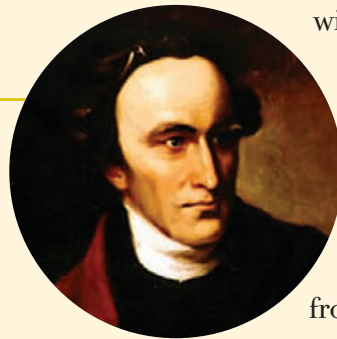
Before his death Henry credited Davies with “teaching me what an orator should be.”

the Statute of Religious Freedom in 1786. This landmark law became the inspiration for the First Amendment to the United States Constitution forever establishing the free exercise of religion. This successful struggle for liberty, in the form of religious toleration, began four decades earlier in Hanover County.

Hanover County’s famous son Patrick Henry fired his first oratorical shot of the coming political and military disturbance known as the American Revolution at Historic Hanover Courthouse in December 1763. Henry, a young lawyer, argued that government was a conditional compact between the king and his

subjects. He asserted that by interfering with a law passed by the Virginia House of Burgesses the King was behaving as a tyrant and had sacrificed his right to the obedience of the people in this case. Ironically, the case involved the salaries of clergymen of the Church of England. The case would come to

be known as “The Parsons’ Cause”. Later Henry became a part of freedom lovers worldwide with his thunderous words “Give me Liberty or Give me Death” at St. John’s Church minutes from Hanover.



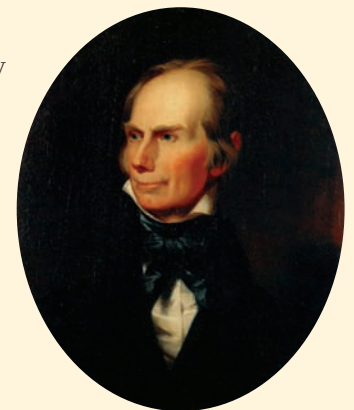
The County is the repository of the greatest collection of Henry related sites in Virginia including his birthplace Studley, his boyhood church Polegreen, his wedding site Rural Plains, his honeymoon cottage Pine Slash, and his adult home Scotchtown, where he lived at the time of his famous call to liberty. You can visit these sites on the Road to Revolution at www.roadtorevolution.org.



Above: A young Patrick Henry argues the Parson’s Cause case. www.parsonscase.com **Left:** A young Patrick Henry. **Below:** Henry Clay.

Hanover was spared much of the direct action of the Revolutionary War until after Yorktown when American and French armies returned. George Washington passed by Hanover Courthouse at this time.

Another famous Hanover native, Henry Clay moved to Kentucky in 1785. Clay’s reputation grew as one of the best orators in American history as well as the father of compromises which postponed the start of the American Civil War by decades.





The Civil War



When civil war came to America in 1861, geography ensured that Hanover County would see a prominent role in the conflict. Most of the county lay within 20 miles of Richmond, and just 75 miles south of Washington, D.C. Northern armies, anxious to strike at the capital city of the Confederacy, repeatedly crossed through Hanover and fought many battles on its soil.

Two railroads bisected the county in the 1860s. The Virginia Central Railroad and the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad were vital components of the Confederate supply system. They brought supplies from northern and western Virginia, and transported troops back and forth between the city and the



Top: Enon Church, site of one of the fiercest calvary battles of the Civil War. **Above:** Gaines' Mill, a unit of Richmond National Battlefield Park, still sees its share of action today. The 5th New York Zouaves performing bayonet drill.



front lines. Union raiders often attacked those tempting targets, burned key bridges, and damaged sections of track.

Major campaigns in 1862 and 1864 devastated the county. George McClellan led a large Union army against

“The battles they fought made the old county famous again, but at a heavy cost.”

Richmond in the spring of 1862. This period of the war, known as the Seven Days Campaign, included the Battle of Beaverdam Creek and the Battle of Gaines' Mill in Hanover. Gaines' Mill was one of the war's bloodiest contests. In 1864, General Ulysses Grant led the Northern army in its second major drive against Richmond. Maneuvering through upper



Above: The Watt house stands as the centerpiece to the 1862 battle of Gaines' Mill.

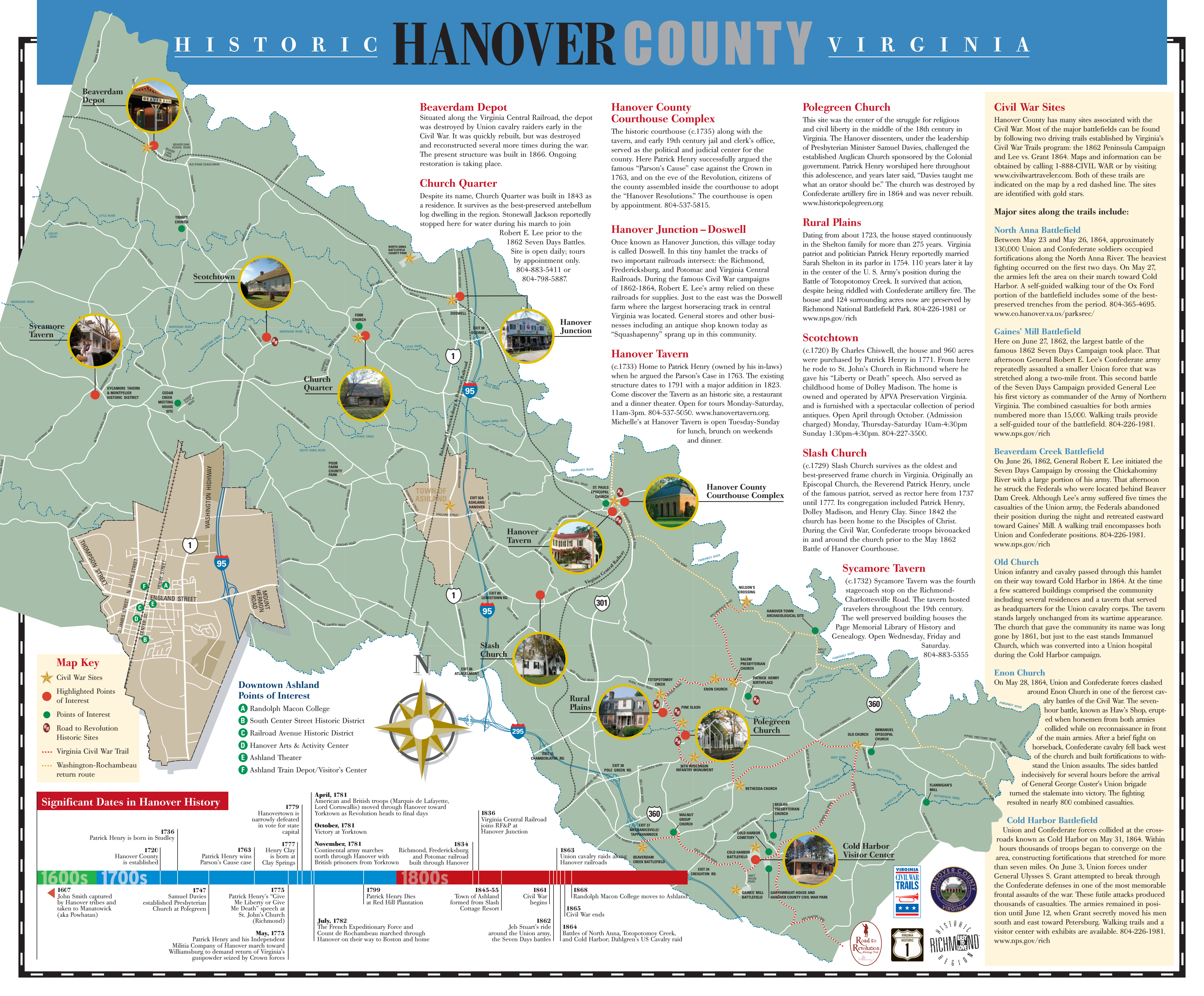


Above: The site of one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War, Gaines' Mill, is managed by the National Park Service.

Hanover, Grant narrowly escaped a disastrous defeat at the North Anna River, only to suffer a serious setback at Cold Harbor in June.

These battles changed Hanover County and the lives of its inhabitants in a way none could have imagined. The county numbered 8,600 citizens when the war began. Just two years later, combined armies of nearly 200,000 occupied the county. When the armies returned in 1864, they brought at least 150,000 men. The battles they fought made the old county famous again, but at a heavy cost. ★

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Beaverdam Depot

Situated along the Virginia Central Railroad, the depot was destroyed by Union cavalry raiders early in the Civil War. It was quickly rebuilt, but was destroyed and reconstructed several more times during the war. The present structure was built in 1866. Ongoing restoration is taking place.

Church Quarter

Despite its name, Church Quarter was built in 1843 as a residence. It survives as the best-preserved antebellum log dwelling in the region. Stonewall Jackson reportedly stopped here for water during his march to join

Robert E. Lee prior to the 1862 Seven Days Battles. Site is open daily; tours by appointment only. 804-883-5411 or 804-798-5887.

Hanover County Courthouse Complex

The historic courthouse (c.1735) along with the tavern, and early 19th century jail and clerk's office, served as the political and judicial center for the county. Here Patrick Henry successfully argued the famous "Parson's Cause" case against the Crown in 1763, and on the eve of the Revolution, citizens of the county assembled inside the courthouse to adopt the "Hanover Resolutions." The courthouse is open by appointment. 804-537-5815.

Hanover Junction - Doswell

Once known as Hanover Junction, this village today is called Doswell. In this tiny hamlet the tracks of two important railroads intersect: the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac and Virginia Central Railroads. During the famous Civil War campaigns of 1862-1864, Robert E. Lee's army relied on these railroads for supplies. Just to the east was the Doswell farm where the largest horseracing track in central Virginia was located. General stores and other businesses including an antique shop known today as "Squashpenny" sprang up in this community.

Hanover Tavern

(c.1733) Home to Patrick Henry (owned by his in-laws) when he argued the Parson's Case in 1763. The existing structure dates to 1791 with a major addition in 1823. Come discover the Tavern as an historic site, a restaurant and a dinner theater. Open for tours Monday-Saturday, 11am-3pm. 804-537-5050. www.hanovertavern.org. Michelle's at Hanover Tavern is open Tuesday-Sunday for lunch, brunch on weekends and dinner.

Polegreen Church

This site was the center of the struggle for religious and civil liberty in the middle of the 18th century in Virginia. The Hanover dissenters, under the leadership of Presbyterian Minister Samuel Davies, challenged the established Anglican Church sponsored by the Colonial government. Patrick Henry worshipped here throughout this adolescence, and years later said, "Davies taught me what an orator should be." The church was destroyed by Confederate artillery fire in 1864 and was never rebuilt. www.historicpolegreen.org

Rural Plains

Dating from about 1723, the house stayed continuously in the Shelton family for more than 275 years. Virginia patriot and politician Patrick Henry reportedly married Sarah Shelton in his parlor in 1754. 110 years later it lay in the center of the U. S. Army's position during the Battle of Totopotomoy Creek. It survived that action, despite being riddled with Confederate artillery fire. The house and 124 surrounding acres now are preserved by Richmond National Battlefield Park. 804-226-1981 or www.nps.gov/rich

Scotchtown

(c.1720) By Charles Chiswell, the house and 960 acres were purchased by Patrick Henry in 1771. From here he rode to St. John's Church in Richmond where he gave his "Liberty or Death" speech. Also served as childhood home of Dolley Madison. The home is owned and operated by APVA Preservation Virginia, and is furnished with a spectacular collection of period antiques. Open April through October. (Admission charged) Monday, Thursday-Saturday 10am-4:30pm Sunday 1:30pm-4:30pm. 804-227-3500.

Slash Church

(c.1729) Slash Church survives as the oldest and best-preserved frame church in Virginia. Originally an Episcopal Church, the Reverend Patrick Henry, uncle of the famous patriot, served as rector here from 1737 until 1777. Its congregation included Patrick Henry, Dolley Madison, and Henry Clay. Since 1842 the church has been home to the Disciples of Christ. During the Civil War, Confederate troops bivouacked in and around the church prior to the May 1862 Battle of Hanover Courthouse.

Sycamore Tavern

(c.1732) Sycamore Tavern was the fourth stagecoach stop on the Richmond-Charlottesville Road. The tavern hosted travelers throughout the 19th century. The well preserved building houses the Page Memorial Library of History and Genealogy. Open Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. 804-883-5355

Civil War Sites

Hanover County has many sites associated with the Civil War. Most of the major battlefields can be found by following two driving trails established by Virginia's Civil War Trails program: the 1862 Peninsula Campaign and Lee vs. Grant 1864. Maps and information can be obtained by calling 1-888-CIVIL WAR or by visiting www.civilwartraveler.com. Both of these trails are indicated on the map by a red dashed line. The sites are identified with gold stars.

Major sites along the trails include:

North Anna Battlefield

Between May 23 and May 26, 1864, approximately 130,000 Union and Confederate soldiers occupied fortifications along the North Anna River. The heaviest fighting occurred on the first two days. On May 27, the armies left the area on their march toward Cold Harbor. A self-guided walking tour of the Ox Ford portion of the battlefield includes some of the best-preserved trenches from the period. 804-365-4695. www.co.hanover.va.us/parksrec/

Gaines' Mill Battlefield

Here on June 27, 1862, the largest battle of the famous 1862 Seven Days Campaign took place. That afternoon General Robert E. Lee's Confederate army repeatedly assaulted a smaller Union force that was stretched along a two-mile front. This second battle of the Seven Days Campaign provided General Lee his first victory as commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. The combined casualties for both armies numbered more than 15,000. Walking trails provide a self-guided tour of the battlefield. 804-226-1981. www.nps.gov/rich

Beaverdam Creek Battlefield

On June 26, 1862, General Robert E. Lee initiated the Seven Days Campaign by crossing the Chickahominy River with a large portion of his army. That afternoon he struck the Federals who were located behind Beaver Dam Creek. Although Lee's army suffered five times the casualties of the Union army, the Federals abandoned their position during the night and retreated eastward toward Gaines' Mill. A walking trail encompasses both Union and Confederate positions. 804-226-1981. www.nps.gov/rich

Old Church

Union infantry and cavalry passed through this hamlet on their way toward Cold Harbor in 1864. At the time a few scattered buildings comprised the community including several residences and a tavern that served as headquarters for the Union cavalry corps. The tavern stands largely unchanged from its wartime appearance. The church that gave the community its name was long gone by 1861, but just to the east stands Immanuel Church, which was converted into a Union hospital during the Cold Harbor campaign.

Enon Church

On May 28, 1864, Union and Confederate forces clashed around Enon Church in one of the fiercest cavalry battles of the Civil War. The seven-hour battle, known as Haw's Shop, erupted when horsemen from both armies collided while on reconnaissance in front of the main armies. After a brief fight on horseback, Confederate cavalry fell back west of the church and built fortifications to withstand the Union assaults. The sides battled indecisively for several hours before the arrival of General George Custer's Union brigade turned the stalemate into victory. The fighting resulted in nearly 800 combined casualties.

Cold Harbor Battlefield

Union and Confederate forces collided at the crossroads known as Cold Harbor on May 31, 1864. Within hours thousands of troops began to converge on the area, constructing fortifications that stretched for more than seven miles. On June 3, Union forces under General Ulysses S. Grant attempted to break through the Confederate defenses in one of the most memorable frontal assaults of the war. These futile attacks produced thousands of casualties. The armies remained in position until June 12, when Grant secretly moved his men south and east toward Petersburg. Walking trails and a visitor center with exhibits are available. 804-226-1981. www.nps.gov/rich

Map Key

- ★ Civil War Sites
- Highlighted Points of Interest
- Points of Interest
- RR Road to Revolution Historic Sites
- Virginia Civil War Trail
- Washington-Rochambeau return route

Downtown Ashland Points of Interest

- A Randolph Macon College
- B South Center Street Historic District
- C Railroad Avenue Historic District
- D Hanover Arts & Activity Center
- E Ashland Theater
- F Ashland Train Depot/Visitor's Center



Significant Dates in Hanover History

1600s	1700s	1800s
1607 John Smith captured by Hanover tribes and taken to Manatowick (aka Powhatan)	1736 Patrick Henry is born in Studley	1779 Hanover town is narrowly defeated in vote for state capital
1747 Samuel Davies established Presbyterian Church at Polegreen	1763 Patrick Henry wins Parson's Cause case	1777 Henry Clay is born at Clay Springs
1775 Patrick Henry and his Independent Militia Company of Hanover march toward Williamsburg to demand return of Virginia's gunpowder seized by Crown forces	1781 Patrick Henry's "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" speech at St. John's Church (Richmond)	1781 November, Continental army marches north through Hanover with British prisoners from Yorktown
	1782 July, The French Expeditionary Force and Count de Rochambeau marched through Hanover on their way to Boston and home	1784 November, Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac railroad built through Hanover
	1799 Patrick Henry Dies at Red Hill Plantation	1834 Henry Clay is born at Clay Springs
		1836 Virginia Central Railroad joins RF&P at Hanover Junction
		1845-55 Town of Ashland formed from Slash Cottage Resort
		1861 Civil War begins
		1862 Jeb Stuart's ride around the Union army, the Seven Days battles
		1863 Union cavalry raids along Hanover railroads
		1865 Civil War ends
		1868 Randolph Macon College moves to Ashland
		1864 Battles of North Anna, Totopotomoy Creek, and Cold Harbor; Dahlgren's US Cavalry raid

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