

COLD HARBOR RD

Hanover County VA

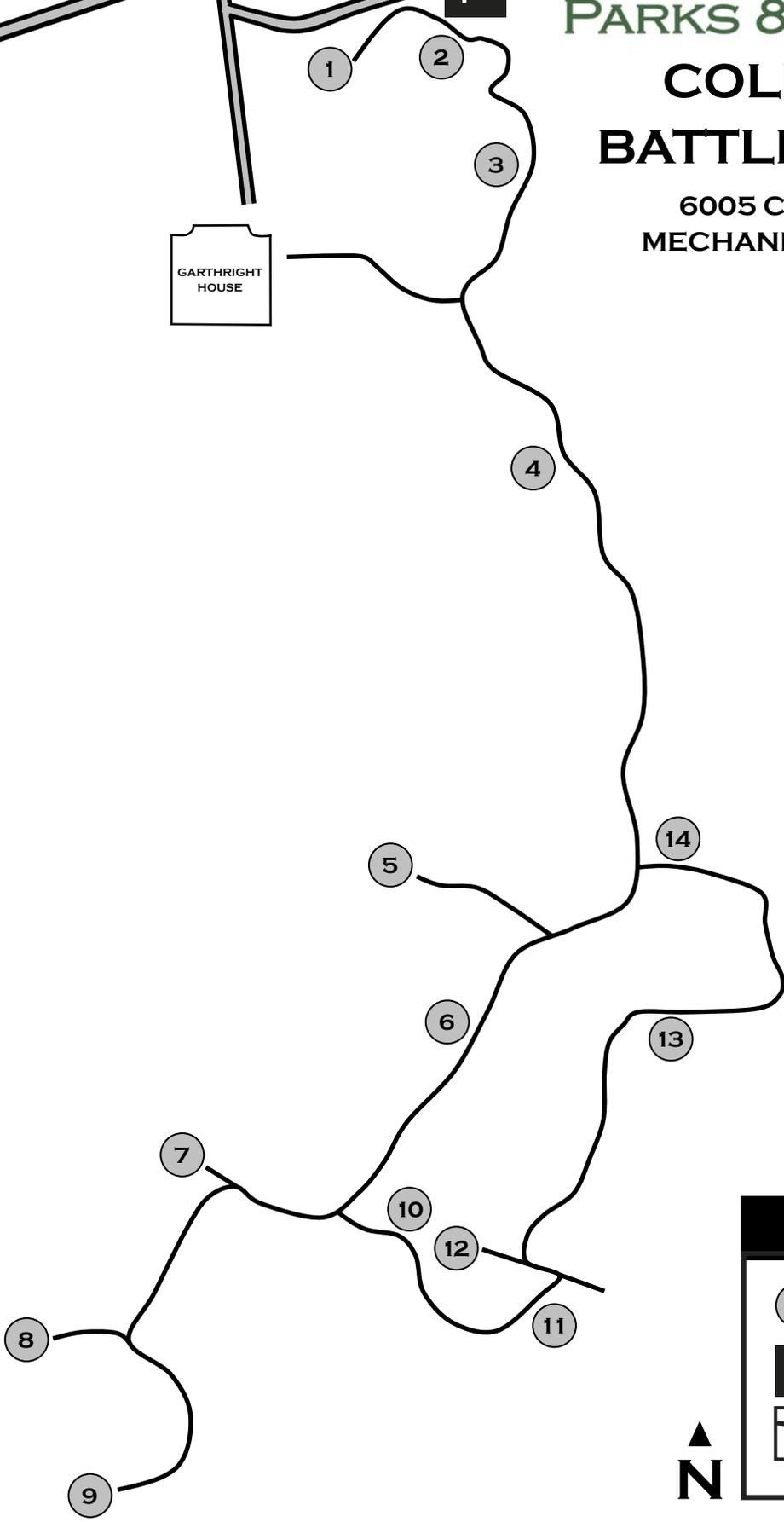
PARKS & RECREATION

COLD HARBOR BATTLEFIELD PARK

6005 COLD HARBOR RD
MECHANICSVILLE, VA 23111

GARTHRIGHT
HOUSE

P



LEGEND

1 INTERPRETIVE
MARKER

P PARKING

TRAIL (1 MILE)



Cold Harbor Battlefield Park

Stop 1. Cold Harbor: June 2, 1864 Famous Civil War Artist, Alfred Waud, provides a rare glimpse of the Cold Harbor battlefield, sketched from this very spot on June 2, 1864. Union cannons blazed away at the Confederate lines only half a mile in front of you.

Stop 2. Cold Harbor Battlefield Walking Trail For thirteen days, Union and Confederate armies faced each other around Cold Harbor, their lines separated by only 150 yards of ground. Twice, on June 1 and June 3, 1864, fighting erupted when the Federals launched massive assaults against the entrenched Confederates.

Stop 3. The Battle Opens Grant massed 45,000 Federals near Old Card Harbor, and ordered an attack, hoping to split Lee's army into two parts. Six Union regiments crossed this ground and passed the Garthright House. After fire from both sides, the Union army quickly started digging a line of works that would be the Union front line.

Stop 4. From Farmland to Forest Time has changed this landscape dramatically since the war. In 1864, much of the area was cleared farmland. One Federal believed the openness of the land was the "greatest part of the misery" at Cold Harbor. "There was no cover from the fire of the enemy," a veteran observed, except in the trench itself.

Stop 5. Union Reserve Line These Union pits may have been a stop along the relay system that brought reinforcements and supplies to the forward line. Imagine soldiers huddled inside these trenches, with their rifles, canteens, blankets, and haversacks, waiting for the call to the front.

Stop 6. Preparation for Battle On June 2, 1864, the night before the grand assault at Cold Harbor, one officer recalled a scene of foreboding. "...I noticed that many of the soldiers had taken off their coats, and seemed to be engaged in sewing up rents in them. ...Upon closer examination, it was found that the men were calmly writing their names and addresses on slips of paper, and pinning the on the backs of their coats, so that their dead bodies might be recognized upon the field, and their fate made known to their families at home...Such courage us more than heroic – it is sublime."

Stop 7. The Deadly Work of Sharpshooters Adding to the misery of the Union and Confederate soldiers at Cold Harbor was the fear of enemy sharpshooters. Quite often armed with special rifles, these marksmen would prey on any unfortunate soldier who appeared in their sights.

Stop 8. Digging In The trenches before you are typical of the earthworks that stretched for nearly seven miles and defined the fighting here at Cold Harbor.

Stop 9. Misery in the Trenches The earthworks before you were home to Union soldiers for nearly two weeks during the fighting at Cold Harbor. One Federal officer described the suffering these troops ...endured in the trenches, "The work of intrenching could only be done at night. The fire of sharp-shooters was incessant.... Sharp-shooters' fire from both sides went on all day; all night the zig-zags and parallels nearer to the enemy's works were being constructed. In none of its marches by day or night, did that army suffer more than during those twelve days."

Stop 10. A Well Preserved Union Artillery Position From here, Union officers watched for activity along the Confederate lines, and opened fire with a barrage of shells whenever they spotted a target. Southern cannoneers responded, but their projectiles either ripped into the ground in front of the Union guns, or passed harmlessly overhead.

Stop 11. The Bloody Eighth Starting from this vicinity on the morning of June 3, 1864, the 8th New York attacked the Confederate earthworks... as part of Grant's assault to break Lee's lines. The 8th New York sustained the highest loss of any regiment at Cold Harbor suffering 505 casualties, with the vast majority falling within 30 minutes.

Stop 12. Federal Artillery Battery This hill afforded Federal gunners a commanding view of the fields stretching past the Garthright House to the confederate lines.... As part of the bombardment preceding the Union assault of June 3, this battery hurled shot and shell at Lee's trenches. Most of Grant's ordinance either fell short or flew harmlessly over the Confederate works.

Stop 13. Battle of Gaines' Mill All the visible remains along the trail date from June 1864, Battle of Cold Harbor, but this ground figured prominently in the Seven Days campaign of 1862 as well. On June 27, 1862, General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's Confederates advance south through here during the final stages of the battle of Gaines' Mill.

Stop 14. A Dreadful Harvest The grim drama at Cold Harbor cost some 13,000 Federals and nearly 5,000 Confederates killed, wounded, or captured. Southern morale soared after the battle, while Grant's men were embittered by the lopsided defeat.