

Richmond National Battlefield Park

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Richmond

In session at Montgomery, Ala., in May 1861, the Confederate Congress voted to remove the Capital of the Confederate States to Richmond, Va. This decision, in effect, made Richmond a beleaguered city for 4 years. Essentially, the move was dictated by political and military considerations. The prestige of Virginia, richest and most populous State in the South, was considered necessary for the success of the Confederacy. For political reasons it was believed that the Capital should be near the border States and the heavy fighting expected there.

Second only to New Orleans, Richmond was the largest city in the Confederacy, having a population of about 38,000. It was also the center of iron manufacturing in the South. The Tredegar Iron



Tredegar Iron Works.

Works, main source of cannon supply for the Southern armies, influenced the choice of Richmond as the Confederate Capital and demanded its defense. During the course of the war, Tredegar made over 1,100 cannon, in addition to mines, torpedoes, propeller shafts, and other war machinery. It expanded to include rolling mills, forges, sawmills, and machine shops. The Richmond Laboratory made over 72 million cartridges, along with grenades, gun carriages, field artillery, and canteens, while the Richmond Armory had a capacity for manufacturing 5,000 small arms a month.

Thus Richmond became the political, military, and manufacturing center of the South, and the symbol of secession to the North.

Situated near the head of the navigable waters of the James River, and within 110 miles of the National Capital at Washington, Richmond was the key to the military planning of both sides. For 4 years the city remained the primary military objective of the Union armies in the east. As one southern newspaper stated: "To lose Richmond is to lose Virginia, and to lose Virginia is to lose the key to the Southern Confederacy."