



THE OVERTON- HILLSMAN FARM HOUSE

Apart from this action but simultaneous with Ewell's engagement, Anderson holds his ground with around 6,300 men as the Union cavalry attacks. Anderson uses his artillery effectively on almost 9,000 blue horsemen but is only holding off the inevitable. Eventually he, too, is overrun, his men breaking and fleeing toward Rice's Station. As they rush across Big Sailor's Creek further down the road, Lee sees them and remarks, "My God! Has the army been dissolved? Anderson loses two generals, and 2,600 men are captured.

Marching down Jamestown Road, behind the wagon train, Gordon finds that it has become bogged down at the "double bridges" crossing over the confluence of Big and Little Sailor's creeks. As Humphrey's men advance on his rearguard at the Lockett farmhouse, they find Gordon protecting the wagons down below in the creek valley.

Union troops continue pressing the Confederate position until nightfall brings an end to the fighting. About 1,700 of Gordon's men are taken prisoner, and about 300 wagons and ambulances are captured.

As night falls over the battlefield, Lee ponders his losses. More than 7,700 men of the Army of Northern Virginia are gone. This is one of the war's largest surrenders of a military force in the field without the men being paroled. The three engagements at Sailor's Creek—at the Hillsman farm, Marshall's Crossroads and the Lockett farm—remove almost a quarter of Lee's effective strength. His men will trudge along for a few days but, finally, 72 hours later, Lee will surrender at Appomattox Court House.

This small Southside Virginia farm house was built circa 1780-1810 by Moses Overton.

The house served as a field hospital for the Union's 6th Army Corps. Approximately 358 Union and 161 Confederate soldiers were treated by medical personnel on the lawn and in the house. A few days later, the wounded were moved by wagon to a larger hospital at Burkeville Junction six miles away.

Relatives of Moses Overton, who included James Moses Hillsman, lived in or near the house until the "Saylor's [post-war spelling] Creek Battlefield Park Association" was organized on May 30, 1934.

The Virginia General Assembly in 1936 appropriated \$1,500 for the purchase of battlefield land to be administered by the Virginia Conservation Commission. The house and 10 acres of land were purchased first. Another \$1,500 was appropriated to restore the structure, and more acreage was added to the park. Restoration was completed in 1948.

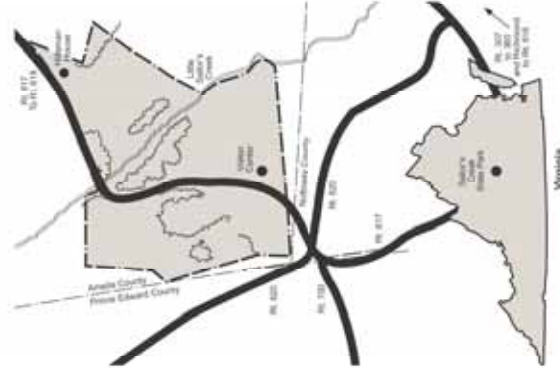
Nearby Twin Lakes State Park provided oversight until July 2008. Then Sailor's Creek Battlefield Historical State Park became a new and separate unit of the state park system managed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Today the house is restored and furnished as a field hospital and home to the Hillsman family. Bloodstains remain on the floor, permanent and silent reminders of the 72 hours before the end.



Sailor's Creek:

72 HOURS BEFORE THE END



Sailor's Creek Battlefield Historical State Park

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Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

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SAILOR'S CREEK BATTLEFIELD
HISTORICAL STATE PARK

Join us, as we step back in time to...

APRIL 3, 1865.

when Gen. Robert E. Lee withdraws his Army of Northern Virginia from the trenches protecting Petersburg and Richmond and leaves in three main columns. A smaller contingent, escaping from the Five Forks battlefield, soon follows. The commanding general plans to regroup these forces about 30 miles west at Amelia Court House, located along the Richmond & Danville Railroad. There he intends to receive rations for his men and march into North Carolina to join up with Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee.

Upon arriving at the county seat village, he finds plenty of artillery ammunition at the depot, but rations have not been sent as ordered. So he decides to delay his march while his hungry men forage in the area. He also must wait for forces, still coming from Richmond, who have been delayed in crossing the Appomattox River.

with all of his army together, Lee moves down the railroad from Amelia only to find that the Union army is across his path seven miles below at Jetersville Station. It seems that while in Amelia, Union cavalry under Gen. Philip Sheridan managed to ride around Lee's army and gain this strategic position. Fast-marching Union infantry soon follow and strengthen Sheridan's roadblock at Jetersville.

Finding his direct route to North Carolina obstructed, Lee decides to make a night march around the Union army and begins a 23-mile westward journey to Farmville on the South Side Railroad. Supply trains from Lynchburg await him there with 80,000 rations for his hungry men. If he can reach the small town before Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's army, he will be able to feed his army and again move toward Johnston.

ON APRIL 5,

as the rearguard of Lee's army passes Amelia Springs north of Jetersville, the Union army is alerted to this movement. Gen. Andrew Humphreys, commander of the Union 2nd Army Corps, immediately pursues the column, marching along the Deatonville-Rice's Station Road. Back in Jetersville, Sheridan's cavalry and Gen. Horatio Wright's 6th Army Corps move out, following along a parallel road to the south of Lee's army.

The Confederate line of march is Gen. James Longstreet's combined First* and Third Corps in the lead, then Gen. Richard Anderson's Corps, followed by Gen. Richard S. Ewell's Richmond Reserve Corps, the main wagon train and Gen. John B. Gordon's Second Corps bringing up the rear. Lee rides with Longstreet's command.

As the column winds through the countryside, it has to cross a small stream known as Little Sailor's Creek. Upon approaching the creek, at a crossroads, known locally as Holt's Corner, Union cavalry strikes the Confederates, and Anderson's men must stop and fight. Two miles beyond, at the next crossroads, bounded by the Marshall and Harper farms, more Union cavalry cuts across the Southerners' path of retreat. Consequently, Gen. Ewell sends the wagon train down Jamestown Road at Holt's Corner to cross Sailor's Creek further downstream. Once the Union cavalry ceases its hit-and-run tactics on the column, Anderson and Ewell proceed forward; Gordon then follows the wagon train, leaving Ewell's rear exposed to advancing Union infantry.

* Union corps designations and numbers, while Confederate corps were identified by spelling the numbers.

When Anderson, whose troops include those under Gen. Bushrod Johnson and George E. Pickett, moves to close the gap between his and Longstreet's command, he finds that the Union cavalry has blocked his path at Marshall's Crossroads, a mile beyond Little Sailor's Creek.

Ewell, who is crossing the creek, learns that Wright's 6th Army Corps is rapidly coming up in his rear. Soon he sees blue infantry, supported by artillery, forming in lines at the Hillsman House. The battle is about to begin.

At about 5:15 p.m., 20 guns are emplaced around the Hillsman House to begin a half-hour bombardment on Ewell's line. The Confederate general has about 5,200 men dug in along the high ground across the creek. The Confederates have no artillery with which to reply to the Union guns. Finally, at 6 p.m., Wright's two divisions of about 7,000 men move across the waist-deep creek and climb the hill. As they advance, Ewell's troops, made up of regular infantry, artillerymen, clerks, marines and sailors, fire a volley at them. Part of the Union line breaks and retreats to the creek. Some Confederates make a countercharge, only to be thrown back by the Union artillery firing canister at them. Wright's forces attack again; they envelop the Confederate battle line this time. Hand-to-hand fighting takes place as the armies clash until the Confederates finally begin to surrender. Six Confederate generals are captured, and Ewell suffers around 3,400 losses killed, wounded, or captured.

