

Petersburg National Battlefield VirtualCache Program

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Site 18: Dictator

N 37° 14.804
W 077° 21.406



Next only to the Crater, the "Dictator" has proven a source of continuous fascination since its arrival on the Petersburg front early in the siege. Only here for the first few months of the siege, it spent most of its time on a rail car sending shells across the Appomattox River to Confederate Fort Clifton. The "Dictator" was here on this spot during its final month.

The fate of the "Dictator" is uncertain but most likely may have gone to scrap after the war. Lacking the original, Petersburg National Battlefield cast a duplicate out of concrete. This was done with the help of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) workers in 1935 and it remained in use until 1969 when the battlefield acquired a 13-inch seacoast mortar from Fort Sumter. Fort Lee brought the mortar up from South Carolina and delivered it to the park that August.

By 2003 the mortar was in dire need of conservation work due to corrosion from exposure to the weather. It was Fort Lee again that delivered it to and from the conservatory. You have also helped in taking the care of the piece and the upkeep of this display as the park uses funds from the entrance fees to preserve this part of the siege's story.

Visit Instructions: Look around the site that the dictator is located on and answer the following question. How did the Union army get the dictator to this location during the war?