

# WESTOVER



## *McClellan's New Base*



### 1862 PENINSULA CAMPAIGN

Following the last of the Seven Days' Battles on July 1, 1862, at Malvern Hill, Gen. George B. McClellan's Union Army of the Potomac continued its retreat to the James River. McClellan had earlier decided to "change his base" from the Pamunkey River to the James and had chosen the Harrison's Landing (Berkeley Plantation) and Westover area as his new base. From then until final evacuation to Fort Monroe on August 16, the 90,000-man army largely remained within its defensive fortifications, further protected by Union gunboats in the river. At first, elements of Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia probed for a weak spot to attack. Finding none, they settled for keeping an eye on the Federals.

While encamped at Berkeley,



Union Gen. Daniel Butterfield of V Corps and a bugler, Pvt. Oliver W. Norton, reworked the last few bars of the "lights out" call into what became known as "Taps." On July 8, President Abraham Lincoln arrived there by steamboat for a one-day visit, conferred with McClellan, and reviewed the troops.

Westover served as the headquarters of McClellan's protégé, Gen. Fitz John Porter. Just after

midnight on August 1, 41 pieces of Confederate artillery at Coggins Point across the river fired on the gunboats and the Union encampment around the house. McClellan reported 25 casualties. It may have been at this time that the eastern flanking building at Westover – the library – was destroyed by fire. Later that day, a Union party occupied Coggins Point, which the Confederates had abandoned.

Built circa 1730 by William Byrd II, the brick mansion at Westover is considered to be one of the most outstanding examples of Georgian architecture in the country. Byrd, who is credited with founding Richmond, is buried on the property. Westover as seen by Edward Lamson Gray in November 1864.

– Illustration courtesy of the Century Club of New York City



Gen. Fitz John Porter