



Foundation Document Overview

Manassas National Battlefield Park

Virginia



Contact Information

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Purpose



MANASSAS NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK preserves and protects the land and resources associated with the First and Second Battles of Manassas to foster understanding and appreciation of the battles and their significance by providing opportunities for interpretation, education, enjoyment, and inspiration.

Significance

Significance statements express why Manassas National Battlefield Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- More than a half century of sectional strife led to bloodshed on July 21, 1861, as Federal and Confederate forces clashed on the fields outside Manassas Junction near Bull Run. This first major land battle of the Civil War was a setback for Union forces that brought sobering casualties on both sides and an escalation in hostilities.
- The Union defeat at the Battle of Second Manassas was the culmination of the Northern Virginia Campaign of 1862, shifting the seat of war from the gates of Richmond, Virginia, to the doorsteps of Washington, D.C., and opening the way for Robert E. Lee's first invasion of the North.
- The presence of civilian spectators at First Manassas reflected the nation's fascination with an early, glorified expectation of what civil war entailed. While they flocked to the Battle of First Manassas, civilians fled the destruction that came with the Battle of Second Manassas.
- With few commemorative monuments on the battlefield landscape, and due to delayed designation as a national park, Manassas National Battlefield Park provides an opportunity to explore the complicated relationship between Civil War history, political action, and commemoration fueled by the Confederate victories / Federal defeats at the battles of First and Second Manassas.
- The contiguous rural landscape preserved and protected by Manassas National Battlefield Park allows visitors to better connect with the historic events of the battles, helps foster reverence for the suffering and sacrifices of its participants, and provides opportunities for learning in an immersive environment.
- As a largely unspoiled area surrounded by the intense pressure of regional development from Washington D.C., the streams, landforms, fields, and forests that comprise Manassas National Battlefield Park are becoming an important refuge for both wildlife and people.
- Manassas National Battlefield Park protects historic structures, museum collections, and archeological resources that are tangible links to the events that unfolded at the battles of First and Second Manassas and serve as a physical record of the people who experienced the Civil War first-hand.

Fundamental Resources and Values



Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Battlefield Landscape**
- **Historic Structures**
- **Archeological Resources**
- **Museum Collection**
- **Commemorative Atmosphere**
- **Solemnity**
- **Natural Communities**

Manassas National Battlefield Park contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Appropriate Recreation**

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- The two battles of Manassas, fought 13 months apart on the same grounds, reflect the transformation of the Civil War in purpose, scale, methods, and impacts on both soldiers and civilians.
- The comparative changes in leadership, army strength, and weaponry in the months during and between the two battles of Manassas illustrate the application and advancement of 19th century military science and technology, as well as the mobilization of both Northern and Southern society to achieve the aims of an expanding war effort.
- The experience of the civilians, free and enslaved, who inhabited the battlefield landscape of Manassas, reflects the changing nature of the Civil War, leading variously to hardship, sacrifice, and freedom for those who lived here.
- The memorialization reflected on the battlefield landscape helped create and influence competing memories of Manassas and the Civil War, reflecting the evolving values regarding the legacy of the battles and the preservation of the battlefield as a place of shared remembrance.
- The experience of battle at Manassas forged bonds of brotherhood among the armies and individual units engaged on the battlefield, influenced political actions of the civilian leadership of North and South, spurred the emergence of a national identity for the Confederacy, and tested the resolve of the Union to pursue the war and expand its aims.



Description

Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes designated Manassas National Battlefield Park on May 10, 1940, to commemorate the Civil War battles of First and Second Manassas. Manassas National Battlefield Park is located in the Piedmont region of Virginia in Fairfax and Prince William counties, approximately 25 miles west of Washington, D.C. Of the park's 5,071 acres, the federal government owns approximately 85% and private owners hold the remaining 15%. Interstate 66 borders the park to the south, Pageland Lane (Virginia State Route 705) borders the park to the west, and Bull Run forms the eastern boundary of the park.

The battles of First and Second Manassas are two well-known battles of the Civil War. First Manassas marked the first major land battle of the Civil War, and Second Manassas, fought approximately a year later, paved the way for Confederate General Robert E. Lee's first invasion of the North. In each instance Confederate armies won and dangerously threatened the national capital in Washington.

Among the park's most important resources are the large tracts of land managed to represent the battlefield landscape as it existed at the time of the Civil War. Included in this landscape are three houses that date from the Civil War period, several post-war historic buildings, a Confederate cemetery, the reconstructed Stone Bridge over Bull Run, six miles of historic road traces, and numerous other resources, including historic structures, archeological resources, cemeteries, trenches, and earthworks.

The farmlands and fields that historically surround the park are giving way to suburban Washington, D.C. While the areas to the north of the park retain some rural character, the areas south and west of the park now bustle with residential and commercial development.

