



Foundation Document Overview

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park

Virginia



Contact Information

For more information about the *Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park Foundation Document*, contact: cebe_superintendent@nps.gov or (540) 869-3051 or write to: Superintendent, P.O. Box 700, Middletown, VA 22645

Purpose



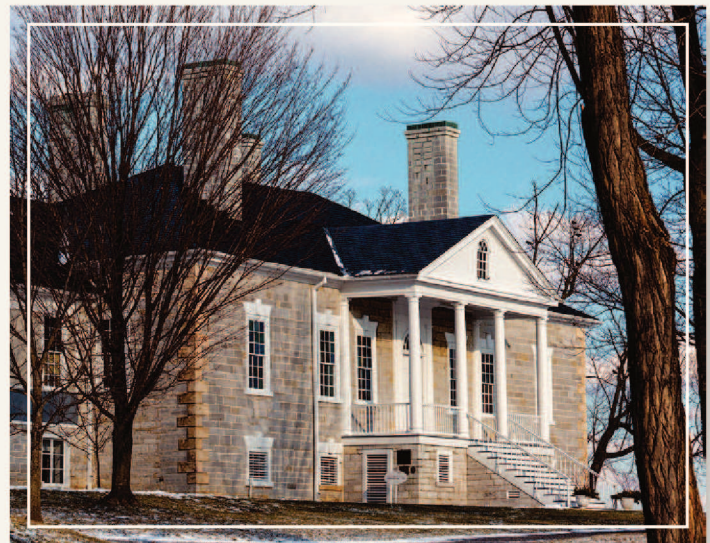
The purpose of CEDAR CREEK AND BELLE GROVE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK is to preserve, protect, and interpret a nationally significant Civil War landscape and antebellum agricultural community; to tell the rich story of Shenandoah Valley history from early American Indian occupation onward; to preserve and interpret the significant historic, natural, cultural, military, and scenic resources associated with the Cedar Creek Battlefield and Belle Grove Plantation areas through partnerships with local landowners and the community; and to serve as a focal point within the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District to recognize and interpret important Civil War events, including the key battles and campaigns of 1862 and 1864.



Significance

Significance statements express why Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical 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.

- Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park includes well-preserved cultural and natural landscape features from the early human occupation of the Shenandoah Valley, including features associated with migration, agriculture, transportation, and commerce.
- Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park contains historically significant examples of the antebellum agricultural community that defined the northern Shenandoah Valley, its ethnic and cultural traditions, merchant milling and market systems, and farm economy that included both slave labor and family farms, as well as examples of the post-Civil War transformation of a changing labor structure. A representative example of the valley's agricultural history and culture is preserved and interpreted at the nationally significant Belle Grove Manor House and other privately held 18th- and 19th-century farmsteads within the park.



Significance



- The Battle of Cedar Creek was a principal strategic operation that had a decisive influence on the Valley Campaign of 1864 and direct impacts on the course of the Civil War. The Union victory contributed to the re-election of President Abraham Lincoln and essentially eliminated the Confederate military presence in the Shenandoah Valley. The battlefield and strategic landscapes at Cedar Creek retain a high degree of integrity, serve to memorialize the events of the battle, and contribute to greater understanding of the Civil War.
- The panoramic views of the mountains, natural areas, waterways, and pastoral surroundings convey an aesthetic and historic sense of life in the Shenandoah Valley, provide visitors with an inspiring setting of great natural beauty, and offer outstanding opportunities for quiet and solitude in an ever-expanding suburban area.
- Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park is the focal point for recognizing and interpreting important events and geographic locations within the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District representing key Civil War battles in the Shenandoah Valley, including those battlefields associated with the Stonewall Jackson Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1862 and Sheridan's Valley Campaign of 1864.

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.

- **Intertwined Landscapes**
- **Historic Structures**
- **Prehistoric and Historic Archeology**
- **Historic Transportation Corridors**
- **Waterways**
- **Museum and Research Collections**
- **Scenic Viewsheds**
- **Plantation and Farmstead Lifestyle and Culture**
- **Partnerships**
- **Opportunities for Contemplation, Inspiration, and Education**
- **Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Historic District**

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical 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.

- **Other Natural Resources**



Description

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park was created by Congress in December 2002 to help preserve, protect, and interpret a nationally significant Civil War landscape and antebellum plantation; to tell the rich story of Shenandoah Valley history; to preserve historic, natural, cultural, military, and scenic resources; and to serve as a focal point within the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District. The park is located in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, adjacent to the historic towns of Middletown and Strasburg, and is within the counties of Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren. The park consists of approximately 3,713 acres that includes prehistoric resources, ecologically important areas, evidence of valley settlement and early European history of the region, examples of plantation life and culture, and significant Civil War resources.

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park is a partnership park with limited property in federal ownership that works collaboratively with other entities including Belle Grove, Inc., the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Shenandoah County, and the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation. These legislated key partners provide the foundation for protecting, preserving, and interpreting park resources by virtue of their ownership of significant acreage within the park, their commitment to a shared preservation ethic, their willingness to provide visitor services and public access, and their consent to manage their property as part of the national historical park. The National Park Service also cooperates with its community partners—the towns of Middletown and Strasburg, and the counties of Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren—to further the purposes of the park. The key partners now own and protect about a third of the land within the park boundary, preserving historic resources, maintaining open space, and protecting unique natural resources.

The Battle of Cedar Creek had a direct impact on the course of the Civil War, nearly eliminating Confederate military presence in the Shenandoah Valley.

Substantial portions of the Cedar Creek Battlefield lie within the park boundary, including historic landscapes, structures, monuments, river fords, military encampments, and avenues of approach. Early European settlement is evident in the park, notably the Valley Pike that has been a major roadway throughout its history, from a prehistoric hunting path, to a wagon road, to a turnpike, to a U.S. highway. The park contains significant examples of the valley's antebellum agricultural community, including manor houses, farmsteads, mills, and a complex network of road traces that reflect the economic and social fabric of the rural community. Belle Grove, Harmony Hall, and Long Meadow, the plantation homes of the Hite and Bowman families, are three impressive historic structures in the park that speak to the power and influence of the slaveholding class—despite being a distinct minority west of the Blue Ridge—during the antebellum period. The natural landscapes and resources of the park offer visitors opportunities for quiet and solitude in an ever-expanding suburban area. Cedar Creek and the Shenandoah River, limestone upland habitats, and cave and karst features in the park provide regionally and nationally significant opportunities for visitor enjoyment and scientific study.

