

2023 SPA Field Trip – Archaeology of Civil War Battlefields and Sites June 8-11, 2023

Summary of Trip Activities as of March 6, 2023

We are working on a fun and exciting long weekend together learning about Civil War history and archaeology. Some details are still being worked out, others may change, but the general outline of what we are doing should be as described.

We are beginning our field trip by having a group dinner and orientation at Sweeney's Tavern in the Historic Farnsworth House Inn in Gettysburg (<http://www.farnsworthhouseinn.com/>) which is housed in a building predating the Civil War. As the website indicates, the inn offers everything from ghost tours to candlelight dinners. It should be a good place to start our weekend and is only a few blocks from our hotel, the 1863 Inn of Gettysburg.

On Friday, we'll be up early, eating the complimentary breakfast and checking out of our hotel. Then our bus will take us to Antietam National Battlefield in Sharpsburg, MD. It looks like the Visitor's Center renovations will not be completed by the time of our trip, but we will stop at the temporary Visitor's Center and get oriented. At 10 AM we are planning a talk by Stephen Potter, retired Regional Archaeologist for the NPS National Capitol Region. He held that position for 36 years and is in an excellent position to tell us about archaeology done at Antietam and how it has enriched understanding of this key Civil War battle. We also will do a partial driving tour of the battlefield and have our picnic lunch while there.

In the afternoon, we will visit Harper's Ferry National Historical Park and the town of Harpers Ferry, WV. We are still working on a possible presentation on and/or tour of the armory that was excavated within the last decade. This is, of course, the site of John Brown's raid. Whether or not we have a formal tour, we can explore the NPS interpretative areas as well as a little of the town. At the end of the afternoon, we are heading to nearby Winchester, Virginia where our hotel is the Fairfield Inn and Suites. Dinner will be on your own or with other participants close to our hotel or possibly in historic downtown Winchester via a cab ride.

On Saturday, following our complimentary breakfast and checking out of the hotel, we plan to briefly visit one of the Civil War battlefields in the Shenandoah Valley, the Fishers Hill Battlefield. It is here that Major General Phillip Sheridan's forces defeated Major General Jubal Early's army and began a two-week long scorched earth campaign in the Shenandoah Valley in September 1864.

After Fishers Hill, we will go on to Manassas National Battlefield Park where we will view the film at the Visitor's Center and have a short walking tour to some of the ruins of structures that figured in one or both of the Civil War battles at Manassas. We'll have our picnic lunch at Manassas, and first thing in the afternoon, we will have a presentation from Karen Orrence, archaeologist with the National Capitol Region, NPS. Karen will be telling us about the discovery of a surgeons' pit at Manassas and the long saga of the dealing with what was found there from which NPS archaeologists learned a lot of lessons.

A little after 2:00 PM, we plan to head back to Gettysburg. We expect to arrive in the late afternoon in time to go to the National Military Cemetery where many Civil War dead are buried. There are resources we can use for a self-guided tour here before we re-check into the 1863 Inn for the evening. Dinner and socializing in downtown Gettysburg will be on your own or with other participants.

Sunday morning we will again have the free hotel breakfast and then the bus will take us to the Visitor Center for Gettysburg National Military Park where we will view the film, visit the museum, and see the famous Cyclorama painting. We are scheduled for a 10:00 AM presentation on archaeology and metal detecting recently done at Devil's Den and Little Round Top, as well as an artifact show and tell given by Jeff Irwin, Cultural Resource Manager, and Kaitlyn Ball, Archaeological Technician for the Park.

We will have a picnic lunch together and do at least a partial battlefield tour. We are still exploring options for how we will do this tour. Participants with their own cars may wish to explore the battlefield more on their own, but the bus back to New Stanton will be leaving by mid-afternoon.

We hope you can tell that the trip is going to give us fabulous exposure to Civil War and Military archaeology and history. Don't miss it. See the practical information about hotels and registration with the registration form, and register today!