



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
National Historical Park
Virginia

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove



From Backcountry to Breadbasket to Battlefield—and Beyond

Virginia's Shenandoah Valley is as famous for historical landscapes as it is for mountain scenery. Prehistoric and historic American Indians made their living from the abundant resources of the Shenandoah River and its tributaries. They established a network of trails throughout the valley.

In 1731 German immigrants Jost Hite and Robert McKay led their families and others to claim land grants in the northern part of the valley.

These early settlers established grain farms and milling complexes, turning backcountry to breadbasket. Despite the encroachment of modern life, valley byways still lead through open farmland and small towns.

On December 19, 2002, Congress created Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park to preserve and interpret key historic sites and the rich cultural heritage of the Shenandoah Valley. At present there are

no National Park Service-operated visitor facilities. Instead, almost all park lands and buildings are owned and administered by one or more of the park's partners: local landowners, county governments, and nonprofit organizations (*see other side for a full list*). Two major sites, Cedar Creek Battlefield Visitor Center and Belle Grove Manor House, are open to the public. Both are good places to start learning the stories of the Shenandoah Valley.



The primary north-south Indian trail through the valley became the Great Wagon Road, carrying new settlers south. It soon evolved into the Valley Turnpike. A roadside wall (above) remains today along the U.S. 11 median near Stickle's Mill.



Above: Armies of reenactors clash outside the Heater House. The Battle of Cedar Creek is reenacted each year in October.

Far left: Belle Grove Mansion's front door opens on the Shenandoah Valley landscape. A significant portion of the battle was fought on the plantation's land.

A Decisive End to the 1864 Valley Campaign

The Shenandoah Valley played a strategic role in the Civil War. Several years of fighting led to the decisive Battle of Cedar Creek on October 19, 1864. A daring dawn surprise attack by 14,000 Confederate troops

under the command of Gen. Jubal Early seemingly routed 30,000 federal troops.

Union Gen. Philip Sheridan rode hard from Winchester and rallied his scattered and battered troops to a sweep-

ing counterattack—and victory for the North. The battle, marking the end of the 1864 Valley Campaign, contributed to Abraham Lincoln's reelection as President and the ultimate Union victory.



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A Partnership Park

This is a partnership park. The local landowners, governments, and independent not-for-profit organizations listed below are primary partners with the National Park Service.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation owns Belle Grove Plantation. Built in 1797 and nearly unchanged, the manor house and historic landscape invite you to experience the life and times of 18th- and 19th-century occupants. Revolutionary War patriot Maj. Isaac Hite built Belle Grove Manor House. He married President James Madison's sister Nelly. Madison often visited Belle Grove. President Thomas Jefferson helped design the house. Belle Grove stood at the center of the Civil War battle of Cedar Creek. Belle Grove Plantation has been open to the public as a historic house museum since 1967. There is an admission fee.

Belle Grove, Inc., operates Belle Grove Plantation and protects sensitive battlefield land. It also owns Harmony Hall (Fort Bowman), an early settlement site on the Shenandoah River. Now a private residence, the site will be opened to the public in the future.

The Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation was chartered in 1988 to preserve and interpret the Cedar Creek Battlefield and the 1864

Valley Campaign. The foundation's Battlefield Visitor Center in Middletown is open seasonally. The foundation also sponsors the annual reenactment and living history event held during the third week of October; there is a charge for admission.

The nonprofit Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation manages the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District. Congress created this national heritage area in 1996 to preserve, protect, interpret, and promote 10 Civil War battlefields and related sites including Cedar Creek. The foundation's land holdings within the new national park are currently used for agriculture and are not open to the public.

The park lies in the northern Shenandoah Valley where Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren counties meet. As part of the partnership, the counties retain planning, zoning, and land-use authorities over private property (3,500 acres) within the "willing landowner" park boundary and over adjacent county lands. Shenandoah County Parks and Recreation administers 151 acres of county parkland along the North Fork of the Shenandoah River. From this site there is a good view of Signal Knob (*far left*). Future plans include river access.

Planning Your Visit

Getting to the Park By car the park is about 90 minutes west of downtown Washington, D.C., and two hours north of Roanoke.

From I-81 southbound: Take exit 302, Middletown. Turn right on Reliance Road; left (south) on U.S. 11 into Middletown. Belle Grove Plantation is on your right, and Cedar Creek Battlefield Visitor Center is on your left.

From I-66 westbound: Take exit 1B onto I-81 northbound. Take exit 302; turn left on Reliance road, then left (south) on U.S. 11 into Middletown. Belle Grove Plantation is on your right and Cedar Creek Battlefield Visitor Center is on your left.

From I-81 northbound: Take exit 298, Strasburg. Turn left (north) on U.S. 11 and proceed to Middletown. Belle Grove Plantation is on your left, and Cedar Creek Battlefield Visitor Center is on your right.

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park



General Management Plan As one of the newest national park areas, Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park has begun development of a general management plan (GMP). The National Park Service maintains a GMP for each park to guide decision-making and describe how the park will be managed for the next 20 years. A GMP typically takes three years to complete and involves the community. Visit the park website to learn more.

More Information

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park is one of more than 380 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. To learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit www.nps.gov

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park
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Private property in the park is closed to the public.

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