



Foundation Document Overview

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park

Georgia and Tennessee



Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of CHICKAMAUGA AND CHATTANOOGA NATIONAL MILITARY PARK is to preserve, protect, and interpret the nationally significant resources associated with the Civil War Campaign for Chattanooga and the 12,000 years of American Indian presence on Moccasin Bend.



Significance

Significance statements express why Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military 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.

- As the first national military park, the preservation of the history, stories, and resources of the Campaign for Chattanooga served as a model for the subsequent preservation of other Civil War battlefields and historical sites.
- The participation of both Union and Confederate Chickamauga and Chattanooga veterans in the creation of the national military park provided a heightened degree of accuracy and legitimacy to the marking of specific battle locations and the placement of monuments and other commemorative features. These features retain solemn importance to descendants of soldiers and visitors today.
- The park was established in part for the purpose of historical and professional military study and continues to offer exceptional opportunities for the study of fighting in the Civil War. Moccasin Bend National Archeological District offers outstanding opportunities to further the understanding of American Indian habitation from transitional Paleo-Indian/ Archaic to historic periods along the Tennessee River.
- The park preserves resources associated with one of the deciding campaigns of the Civil War, where the Tennessee River, railroad system, and mountainous terrain made Chattanooga a strategic location for accessing the South. A Union victory assured access to this “Gateway to the Deep South,” ultimately hastening the end of fighting and the reunification of the United States.
- Located at an important geographic crossroads, Moccasin Bend National Archeological District is one of the best preserved, most important, and most concentrated archeological assemblages representing the sequence of southeastern American Indian cultures known to be extant in the Tennessee River Valley. Its importance was recognized in its designation as the first national archeological district.
- Moccasin Bend National Archeological District retains profound cultural importance for contemporary American Indian tribes with ancestral ties to the area.

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.

- **Battlefields and Related Sites**
- **Commemorative Features**
- **Archeological Resources of the Civil War and American Indian Habitation of Moccasin Bend**
- **Strategic and Important Views**
- **Contemplative Experience**

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military 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 Recreational Opportunities**
- **Trail of Tears Resources**



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.

- Strategic views and the area's diverse landscape of mountains, rivers, fields, and forests have influenced the movement, settlement, and communication of people over thousands of years.
- The park is a place where identity and citizenship have been denied, defined, and won through conflict and compromise, from the American Indians to the Civil War, to modern civil rights.
- The diverse ideals and beliefs of the American public have influenced the preservation, education, commemoration, and access of the park through time.
- Many Union and Confederate veterans came together in an act of unity to establish the park. From the veterans to those visiting today, these battlefields allow for forgiveness, remembrance, and, in some cases, a place to forget.



Description

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park was established by Congress in 1890 as the country's first national park set aside for its historic significance and first designated U.S. national military park. It became the model for subsequent federal protection of other Civil War battlefields such as Antietam, Shiloh, Gettysburg, and Vicksburg. At nearly 10,000 acres, it is also the largest federally protected Civil War battlefield, encompassing multiple units along the Tennessee–Georgia border and containing nearly 1,500 commemorative features such as monuments, markers, and tablets. In 2003, the park purpose expanded with the inclusion of Moccasin Bend National Archeological District, which preserves 12,000 years of American Indian presence.

The park consists of several units, the two largest being Chickamauga Battlefield at more than 5,000 acres and Lookout Mountain Battlefield at more than 3,000 acres, including the outstanding view from Point Park. Other park units, such as the various parcels known as “reservations” on Missionary Ridge, Orchard Knob, and Signal Point, are smaller in acreage and not contiguous with the larger units. The park also owns a number of commemorative features located on private or municipal property in the communities outside the park boundary.

Moccasin Bend, at 768 acres, is the third largest unit of the park located in an area formed by a prominent bend in the Tennessee River just west of downtown Chattanooga. It contains one of the best-preserved, most compact, and most diverse sample of archeological remains known in the 650-mile Tennessee River Valley. The area contains a special collection of sites that chronicle important aspects of human history, including transitional Paleo-Archaic and Archaic sites, Woodland period settlement sites, fortified Mississippian villages, an area representative of Spanish exploration and settlement of the southeastern United States, a contact point between native and nonnative peoples, and segments of the original route of the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. Moccasin Bend also contains the location of Union earthworks, cannon emplacements, rifle pits, bivouac pads, and access roads, which were strategically important in breaking the Confederate siege of Chattanooga.

In addition to preserving the aforementioned cultural resources, this park's natural landscape offers a vast green space adjacent to the growing metropolitan area surrounding Chattanooga, and protects habitats for a number of threatened and endangered plants and animals. It also offers the local population (more than 400,000 residents) and visitors (nearly 1 million annually) opportunities to view wildlife, enjoy scenic views, and appreciate natural beauty. More than 100 miles of trails allow visitors to pursue appropriate recreational activities such as walking, running, hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking. Secondary roads in Chickamauga Battlefield are also popular for bicycling. While some areas near the park are still fairly rural in character, other units are located in an urban setting, such as Orchard Knob and Sherman Reservation. The National Park Service is actively working with local governments and other stakeholders to connect the park to a growing municipal and regional trail system.

