

# Teaching with Historic Places in the Parks

## On-Site/Off-Site Students Learn about Andersonville

One of the most memorable weeks of my National Park Service career took place several years ago in Virginia while attending a workshop to write a Teaching With Historic Places (TwHP) lesson plan for Andersonville National Historic Site. It is rather hard to describe the emotion as I ate, slept, and lived in Montpelier, the home of James and Dolley Madison. In addition, one day during that week was Constitution Day. Although I looked for the ghost of the “Father of the Constitution,” James Madison did not appear and the day and night passed without incident. Still, I felt overwhelmed with the realization that I was in a historic place during such a very special time (not to mention feeling a little guilty that others did not have this same opportunity and experience).

During that week of working on the TwHP lesson for Andersonville, I realized that the educational materials that I and fellow workshop participants were developing had the potential to touch many people. I hoped that they would encourage students to learn more about this country’s historic treasures, events, and people. For many students in many grade levels, the study of history means sitting in class, listening to a lecture, and memorizing dates. These ways of studying history do have their place, but history is so much more than that. Accolades to the educator who can relate history to the student and make it come alive in the student’s imagination!

One tool that can help educators reach this goal is the series of TwHP lesson plans. They are easy to obtain and provide quick reference material on a multitude of historic places. One of the advantages of the TwHP series is that the information can be used in a variety of ways. Educators can use the material to teach students who are unable to visit a historic site, prepare students who will visit the site, or conduct a post-visit “follow-up” or refresher for students who visited a historic site.

The Andersonville lesson\* has been used in all three ways mentioned above. Students from as far away as Virginia have used the lesson to examine the Civil War prison camp before visiting. Jim Percoco has brought his Springfield, Virginia, applied history students to Andersonville several times. Because the park staff knows that the students already have made good use of the lesson plan and other information, the staff person who gives the tour of the prison camp and national cemetery can delve beyond the basic story and provide deeper insight into the administration of the prison and prisoner relationships to the guards and each other. Not only has the lesson plan provided students with insight and information regarding the prisoner of war camp, but perhaps just as importantly it has instigated discussions and questions. The students want to learn more, arriving at Andersonville with insightful questions and emotions derived from the knowledge that many individuals, North and South, suffered tremendously at this place. They realize that among the Union prisoners of war buried in the cemetery are young boys, African Americans, American Indians, Caucasians, Hispanics, and even a woman who had concealed her identity. Students realize that everyone faced the same conditions and that survival was more important than background. The students can relate to these individuals. They have a connection with the people who were there.

It is not only important but imperative that we continue to introduce students to the many historic places in this country. TwHP is an ideal avenue for this agenda. This unique series can help keep the history of our historic places fresh in the hearts and minds of today’s students. There is an inscription on the Wisconsin Monument at Andersonville which reads: “To Live In Hearts We Leave Behind Is Not to Die.” The Teaching with Historic Places series is a positive step to educate students with interesting, pertinent information that will make history mean something to them and perhaps even be enjoyable in the process.

*Alan Marsh, Cultural Resources Specialist, Andersonville National Historic Site, Georgia*

\* <<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/11andersonville/11andersonville.htm>>

# Teaching with Historic Places in the Parks

## Teaching the Klondike Gold Rush

Five years ago, when I was invited to participate in a Teaching with Historic Places (TwHP) workshop, I was apprehensive—how could I write a lesson plan in just five days? I was never trained as a teacher; I had no idea what to do. Fortunately, the TwHP template is easy to use and can be applied to any historical site, public or private, prehistoric or modern. Attending the workshop turned the process into a collaborative effort, bouncing ideas off my peers, finding out what worked and what did not. With a small assortment of secondary and primary sources pulled from the park's library and vertical files, I was able to write a tightly focused lesson plan that allows students to explore how Seattle was affected by the Klondike Gold Rush. Five years later, the publication and subsequent digitization of the park's lesson plan has given the staff a tool to reach literally thousands of students who are unable to visit the park during the course of a typical school year.

Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park (NHP) has two units, one in Seattle, Washington and the other in Skagway, Alaska. Because of the great distance between them—approximately 1,000 miles, both units are administered as though they were separate parks. The interpretive programs tell two different parts of the story of the Klondike Gold Rush. In Seattle,

the program centers on how miners prepared for their trip in Seattle and how the 1898 gold rush affected the United States. In Skagway, their story revolves around how the gold rush affected southeast Alaska. Skagway controls 2,400 acres of land and about a dozen historic buildings; the Seattle unit is in a storefront in Seattle's oldest neighborhood, Pioneer Square. Because the Seattle unit of Klondike Gold Rush NHP is a small park, with limited staff, a comprehensive, off-site outreach program is beyond what the park can offer. The TwHP lesson plan is used as a tool to bring the park's story into classrooms that are unable to visit the park. In 1997-1998, when the park celebrated the centennial of the Klondike Gold Rush, the lesson plan became one of the key components for an outreach program. A grant from the Parks As Classrooms program allowed the park to purchase nearly every lesson plan that was in the publisher's inventory and distribute them to area teachers for free. In the past few years we have mailed hundreds of lesson plans not only to teachers in the Seattle-Tacoma region, but all over the United States.

The success of Seattle's lesson plan prompted Skagway to write a lesson plan. The author, a park volunteer, did not have the benefit of attending a workshop, but the directions in the TwHP "Guide To Developing Lesson Plans"<sup>1</sup> provided directions for writing a lesson plan according to the established formula. The advantages of having a pair of lesson plans is enormous; we can tell the story of the gold rush in a way that encompasses the resources of both units. Now that both lesson plans are free and available on the web,<sup>2</sup> we hope to reach a wider audience, especially since so many schools now have high speed access to the Internet. While feedback from our clientele has been limited, comments have been generally positive. It is now up to the park to spread the word.

*Marc Blackburn, Education Coordinator, Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, Seattle, Washington*

<sup>1</sup> <<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/guide.htm>>

<sup>2</sup> <<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/155klondike/155klondike.htm>> and <<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/175skagway/175skagway.htm>>

*With dreams of striking it rich, hopeful miners ascend the "Golden Stairs" up to Chilkoot Pass on the Chilkoot Trail, Alaska, in 1897. Courtesy Library of Congress.*



# Teaching with Historic Places in the Parks

## Digging History at Fort Frederica

*On the serene, isolated west shore of St. Simons Island, Georgia, the ruins of a once flourishing 18th-century settlement stand. A powder magazine overlooks Frederica River, a reminder of the fort that protected the British colonies against the Spanish during the early-18th-century struggle for control of the southern frontier of English occupation in the New World. The excavated foundations of various structures remind visitors that from 1736-1758, the planned community of Frederica served the military garrison quartered there and housed a civilian population.*

So begins the TwHP lesson plan “Frederica: An 18th-Century Planned Community,” by Marion Robinson. Georgia curriculum standards require learning about colonial history in the fourth grade and Georgia history in the eighth grade. Fort Frederica National Monument satisfies both these requirements. The lesson plan, consisting of activities, readings, and historic and modern maps of the fort, town, and southeast region, though written at an eighth-grade level, provides supplemental material for an active fourth-grade program.

In 1994, Fort Frederica National Monument established an archeology education program in collaboration with the Glynn County school system. Each year, over 1,100 fourth-grade stu-

dents excavate artifacts in a disturbed archeological site at the park and analyze the unearthed artifacts in an archeological laboratory located at a nearby school. Teachers use the curriculum, *Discovering Our Past Through Historical Archaeology*, to facilitate the study of archeology to students. Over 20 hours of classroom time is spent on topics ranging from concepts to theory, and from field work and laboratory analysis to report writing and artifact conservation. The TwHP lesson developed on Fort Frederica filled in the missing historical content needed. In 1998, age-appropriate lessons for the fourth grade, entitled *Frederica Families*, were developed and added to the archeology curriculum.

Visitation to Frederica by eighth-grade students and their classes statewide occurs during the spring academic season. “Frederica: An 18th-Century Planned Community” continues to serve Georgia’s classrooms. Access via the Internet\* has created an opportunity not only for Georgia’s teachers and students but also for teachers nationwide to learn about one of our national treasures.

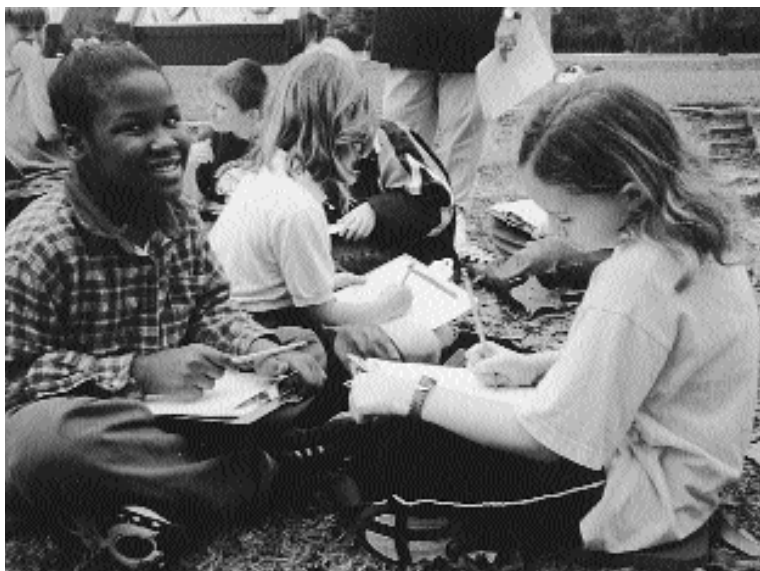
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Noelle Conrad, *Education Specialist, Boston Support Office, National Park Service; formerly, Interpretive Park Ranger/Education Coordinator, Fort Frederica National Monument, Georgia*

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\* <<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/31frederica/31frederica.htm>>

*Fourth-grade students from Golden Isles Elementary School, Glynn County, Georgia, study Fort Frederica National Monument. Photo by the author.*



# Teaching with Historic Places in the Parks

## Training Teachers to Use Historic Places at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania

*I enjoyed attending the workshop. I look forward to looking through the materials and using them in my classroom.*

*I can use these resources to better teach my students and enrich their knowledge of history.*

*Teacher's participating in a 1999 workshop visit the Sunken Road and learn how Robert E. Lee won his most lopsided victory in the 1862 Battle of Fredericksburg. Courtesy Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, National Park Service.*

Two educators who had just completed a teacher workshop at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park (NMP) wrote these comments about their day's experience. Many others who have attended workshops conducted by the park share similar responses to the information and resources that they have received. Among the education programs and materials I describe for the participants is the TwHP program.

I was just beginning to develop an education program at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania NMP in 1993, when I received an opportunity to participate in a TwHP workshop. The purpose was to develop a lesson plan for our park using historic places to teach about events, themes, people, or issues related to the social studies cur-

riculum. Park historian Elsa Lohman and I teamed together to produce "Chatham Plantation: Witness to the Civil War." This antebellum home, located in Stafford County, Virginia, was the center of military activity between 1862 and 1864. Once the centerpiece of a thriving estate supported by nearly a hundred slaves, it now witnessed the turmoil of war. Nearby, four major battles of the Civil War were fought. The Lacy family of Chatham became refugees like so many other civilians in the surrounding community. Their home became a communication center, headquarters, and later a hospital. President Abraham Lincoln, Walt Whitman, and Clara Barton visited wartime Chatham. Primary sources, maps, and photographs provide students with a sense of time and place.

More than a hundred teachers in the five area school systems have attended our workshops since 1994, eager to learn as much as possible about the Civil War. In this fast-growing part of Virginia, many teachers are new to the area and are unfamiliar with the park and its resources. While an abundance of material exists on the Civil War, teachers do not have time to become historians and sift through history books. Teachers here have the unique opportunity to teach students who live on land upon which armies marched, camped, and fought. They welcome avenues through which to excite students both in and out of the classroom to touch, feel, and experience this momentous time in American history. Students, in turn, can develop an appreciation and sense of stewardship for historical places and become potential champions of preservation.

In my workshop I share a number of curriculum-based programs designed to enrich classroom studies of the American Civil War and help students meet Virginia Standards of Learning for Social Studies. The traveling trunk serves as a mini-museum with reproduction uniforms and equipment for students to handle and examine. The traveling map programs include large canvas maps for a hands-on study of the area geography and battlefields. Park brochures, pamphlets, and teacher packets provide useful information and ideas.



Our TwHP lesson plan is another avenue available to help teachers link students to their historical community. Educators in Stafford County have particularly appreciated this concise and well-designed lesson, which augments the Civil War curriculum with people, places, and events that happened right in the backyards of many area students. County schools regularly schedule field trips to Chatham as part of an awareness of local history and Chatham's role in the bigger view of the war.

I have found that many teachers are not familiar with TwHP, so I provide workshop participants with a listing of all the lesson plans available from the National Register of Historic Places. Should teachers desire short lessons and information to support other historical and cultural units of study, they will have a handy educational resource for assistance. I even find numerous occasions in the park's visitor centers to offer this and other educational material to visiting teachers.

The staff at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania has made a striking success in the community by employing cultural resources as points of departure for curriculum-based education programs. None of the park's attempts to secure funding for such programs has met with any success, so all of our endeavors have been wedged into other operations as an intermittent collateral duty. Funding limitations may soon cause our educational programs to evaporate. Those programs, such as the Teaching with Historic Places lesson plans, have proved the rich benefits that can accrue from using historic places as the grist for teaching.

A Stafford County teacher summed up her overall experience in a workshop held in Fredericksburg, August 19, 1999: "Wonderful lesson ideas and plans. Thanks for the information about this untapped source."

*Janice Frye, Education Coordinator, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, Virginia*

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Patti Reilly

## Curriculum Connections

### Making the Most of National Park Experiences

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What's the first thing you would do at the start of summer break after teaching a full year in the classroom? Most of us would select an activity that was relaxing and probably not related to school. Not so for a dedicated group of educators who participated in the Historic House Explorers Institute this past June. Teachers, museum educators, and content specialists from Massachusetts, New York, South Carolina, and Washington, DC, signed up for a one-week working institute to develop a framework, methodology, and action plan for developing curriculum-based programs that teach seventh- and eighth-grade students to "read" historic homes. Sponsored by the National Park Service (NPS), Society for the Preservation

of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), the Institute focused on the use of primary sources and issues related to learning styles, standards, content and skill acquisition, and authentic assessment.

This type of collaboration is essential for the development of effective NPS education programs. Although NPS sites have great potential to teach students about concepts, people, places, and events, if programs are not based on the school curriculum, teachers will choose other options to support their course of study. Today's educators are faced with required learning standards, lack of transportation funds, and a host of issues vying for their limited time; they cannot experiment with programs not designed to meet