



NHL Executive Summary



Name of Property: Cedar Creek Battlefield and Belle Grove NHL (update)

City, State: Middletown, VA and vicinity

Period of Significance: 1771-1864

NHL Criteria: 1, 5

NHL Theme: I: Peopling Places

III: Expressing Cultural Values

IV: Shaping the Political Landscape

2. governmental institutions

3. military institutions and activities

V: Developing the American Economy

Previous Recognition: NHL designation, 1969

National Historic Context: Eighteenth-Century Growth (1731-1800), the Antebellum Period (1800-1861), and the Battle of Cedar Creek (1861-1864).



NHL Significance:

- This nomination updates the areas of significance, period of significance, NHL criteria, and boundary, and applies current NHL standards to the Cedar Creek Battlefield and Belle Grove NHL. In doing so, it broadens the definition of the district's significance, by incorporating recent scholarship on the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864, the Battle of Cedar Creek, and Belle Grove Plantation, while tracing the development of the cultural landscape within the context of the social, cultural, economic, and architectural history of the Shenandoah Valley. A minor name change (adding "Plantation") is proposed as well.
- The historic district comprises the well-preserved Cedar Creek Battlefield, site of a major Civil War engagement that occurred on October 19, 1864. The nomination update provides more extensive documentation and context on Cedar Creek Battlefield and Belle Grove Plantation's national significance under Criterion 1 in the areas of Military History and Politics/Government.
- This update adds national significance under Criterion 5. The Cedar Creek and Belle Grove NHL District is a significant cultural landscape containing numerous eighteenth- and nineteenth-century architectural resources, mill ruins, historic cemeteries, and important archaeological sites that collectively tell the story of the colonization and settlement of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

Integrity:

- This amended NHL nomination documents a diverse array of resources that are associated both with the Battle of Cedar Creek and the development of the broader, underlying cultural landscape during the eighteenth century and antebellum period. Contributing resources include **34 buildings, 4 structures, and 44 sites**. Noncontributing resources include **789 buildings, 3 structures, 38 sites, and 4 objects**.
- The terrain and character of the landscape exist much as it did at the time of battle. Many of the resources within the expanded NHL district retain high integrity and, overall, the landscape has experienced relatively little encroachment from development considering its vast size.

Owner of Property: Multiple, private, USDA-Forest Service, DOI-National Park Service

Acreage of Property: 4 discontinuous sections totaling 10,851.75 acres

Origins of Nomination: Original-Historic Sites Survey; update-National Park Service and Belle Grove Plantation

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: High

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None-public review through PEPC, received no negative response.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of December 21, 2023):

- Karen Beck-Herzog, Site Manager, Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park (via email)
- David N. Duncan, President, American Battlefield Trust
- Kristen Laise, Executive Director, Belle Grove Plantation



- Robert Nieweg, Senior Vice President for Preservation Services and Outreach, and Ross M. Bradford, Deputy General Counsel, National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Jack Owens, Park Ranger – Resource Preservation, Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation (via email)
- Mary Yonce, District Ranger, Lee Ranger District, George Washington and Jefferson National Forests (via email)

Landmarks Committee Comments: Committee members requested additional comparative analysis to support the national significance of Belle Grove Plantation and clarification of why Criterion 6 was not used.

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the National Park System Advisory Board recommend to the Secretary of the Interior the acceptance of the NHL updated documentation for the Cedar Creek Battlefield and Belle Grove National Historic Landmark located in and near Middletown, Virginia, with any additions and corrections as noted by the Committee being made prior to the nomination being forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior for action.

Advisory Board Recommendation: The National Park System Advisory Board recommends to the Secretary of the Interior the acceptance of the updated documentation for the Cedar Creek Battlefield and Belle Grove Plantation National Historic Landmark located in and around Middletown, Virginia.