



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Memorandum

To: Kristopher Butcher, Superintendent, Manassas National Battlefield Park (MANA)

From: Kristen Martine, Principal Bureau Archeologist, National Park Service

Subject: Recommendations for Determination of Archeological Interest, Burial #3, Site No. 44PW0301

Purpose.

This memorandum provides factual and contextual information regarding a Civil War era burial (one partial set of human remains) recovered from the John Dogan Farm site (Rosefield, or site number 44PW0301) within Manassas National Battlefield Park.

The memorandum documents the National Park Service Principal Bureau Archeologist's recommendation regarding a determination of archeological interest pursuant to 43 CFR 7.33 for Burial #3, recovered between March 18 and 23, 2024. Recommendations and facts presented are offered to support the Manassas National Battlefield Park Superintendent in their determination of archeological interest.

Background.

Determinations of archeological interest under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA). 43 CFR 7.33 of the Department of the Interior supplemental regulations for implementing ARPA provides federal land managers with the authority to determine that certain material remains are not or are no longer of archaeological interest and therefore are not to be considered archaeological resources under ARPA (43 CFR 7.33(a) and 43 CFR 7.33(a)(5)). A federal land manager may make such a determination if material remains are not capable of providing scientific or humanistic understandings of past human behavior, cultural adaptation, and related topics (43 CFR 7.33(b)).

Determinations must follow procedural steps in regulation, and be based on a professional archaeological evaluation of material remains and similar materials within the area under consideration consistent with:

- (1) Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation ([48 FR 44716](#), Sept. 29, 1983)
- (2) [36 CFR § 60](#), National Register of Historic Places
- (3) [36 CFR § 63](#), Determinations of Eligibility for Inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places
- (4) [36 CFR § 65](#), National Historic Landmarks Program (probably not relevant in this case)

Manassas Battlefield Historic District. The Manassas Battlefield Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places primarily for the area's association with the First and Second Battles of Manassas (July 21, 1861 and August 28-30, 1862, respectively). The National Register District includes 126 contributing buildings, sites, and objects from the period of significance, which begins in 1820 and ends in 1942. The district is listed on the National Register for its contributions to US history under all four National Register criteria of significance as summarized below.

Criterion A: The First and Second Battles of Manassas (both critical Civil War events) occurred within the district, and so it is a location associated with important events in US history.

Criterion B: The First and Second Battles of Manassas are where Brigadier General Thomas J. Jackson and Robert E. Lee gained prominence as Confederate Civil War leaders, and so the district is associated with persons that made important contributions to US history.

Criterion C: Many buildings within the district were occupied by soldiers during the First and Second Battles of Manassas, and also embody “the architectural evolution of the rural area before and after the war” (Trieschmann 2005, p. 49). These structures illustrate Federal architecture and a vernacular landscape between 1780 and 1820.

Criterion D: Contributing features of the district have yielded or have the potential to yield information important to the general history of the area during the period of significance. Specifically, “the [district] is significant as the hallowed ground of the two Manassas battles, housing artifacts of the devastating engagements, entrenchments, encampments and burial sites” (Trieschmann 2005, p. 50).

The battlefield retains integrity of location, setting, feeling and association.

Burial #3 – Manassas National Battlefield Park, Civil War Burial Internment within a Limb

Amputation Pit. Burial #3 is a partially intact set of human remains recovered from an area where amputated limbs were discarded after the Second Battle of Manassas. The burial area is associated with the John Dogan Farm. Union soldiers occupied this property on August 29th, 1862, first using it as an artillery placement site, and later as a field hospital after surgeons “took control of the house” for use as a field hospital for the remainder of the three-day battle. The duration of field hospital use is unknown, but Army medical records indicate that the house served as “one of Union Medical Director Thomas A McParlin’s regimental hospital or dressing stations from September 1 to 6” (Bedell 2024, p. 8).

The amputation pit was discovered in 2014 during excavations associated with water pipe maintenance. Two burials and seven (possibly eight) amputated limbs were removed in 2015. Excavations continued in 2024, locating an additional burial and several additional amputated limbs. In total, three sets of human remains and 16 amputated limbs were excavated and removed from the property. A foot was also recovered, but appears to be associated with the first burial removed from the limb pit in 2015 (Bedell 2024, p. 46).

Notably, the inclusion of burials with amputated limbs does not conform to standard Civil War Army burial protocols, which required the separation of intact individuals and amputated limbs (Bedell 2024, p. 23).

An osteological analysis was performed on Burial #3 in November of 2024 to achieve the following objectives:

1. Complete a descriptive inventory of remains;
2. Identify the minimum number of individuals present;
3. Conduct a basic identification of any pathologies; and
4. Identify evidence of trauma and provide a basic interpretation.

The resulting technical report presents the following facts and conclusions regarding Burial #3.

Condition. Preservation of the individual was assessed as generally poor due to soil conditions that caused bone deterioration, historic plowing in the area, and backhoe excavation associated with a waterline. Fragmentation of bone during transport from the field to the lab made confirmation of original measurements taken in the field impossible in the laboratory (Bedell 2024, p. D-3).

Roughly 40% of the human remains were intact, and no complete long bones were present. Historic plowing of the area crushed and relocated the skull (minus an occipital bone) and right arm (Bedell 2024, p. D-3). The knees may also have been affected by the backhoe during waterline excavation (Bedell 2024, p. 29). Fragments of assorted bones and teeth were found in soil within the excavated area. Little of the pelvis remained (Bedell 2024, p. D-3).

Identifying Characteristics, Pathologies, and Trauma. Burial #3 would have been between 16 and 19 years of age at the time of death based on dentition and epiphyseal union. This individual's height would have been between 158 and 164 cm (5'1" – 5'3"). The basis for the height measurement is from long bone measurements taken during excavation and the general orientation of the remains in the field (Bedell 2024, p. D-3 through D-4). While the sex of this individual could not be definitively established because of the condition of the pelvis, other evidence (burial in a Union soldier uniform, cause of death, and burial in an amputation limb pit associated with a Union soldier battlefield hospital) indicates that this individual was male.

The presence of "six brass New York State Excelsior coat buttons and seven brass cuff buttons" indicates that this individual was a member of the Union Army and buried in a New York infantry jacket. Other items found with the individual include a jacket clothing hook and a hard rubber comb (Bedell 2024, p. 29).

The report concludes that "A lead artillery case shot ball recovered from the neck area of the remains could indicate cause of death, although this remains inconclusive" (Bedell 2024, p. D-5).

Condition and Research Potential/Contributions. The osteological analysis concludes that Burial #3 is in poor condition and generally "less well preserved" than the burials recovered in 2015. The analysis further states that "more detailed physical study of the bones would likely not be informative." The analyst notes that isotopic analysis could inform about the geographic region in which the individual lived prior to death, but would not provide new information. Burial #3 was interred in a New York infantry jacket, making the individual's origins "seem clear" (Bedell 2024, p. D-5).

Archeological Interest Evaluation and Recommendations.

Summary of Evaluation. Recommendations in this memo are based on a professional archeological evaluation conducted by National Capital Region Archeologist Dr. Joshua Torres as documented in a memorandum dated September 12, 2025, and supplemental reference material. Additional references were examined by the NPS Principal Bureau Archeologist between September 20th and 24th. Both individuals conducting this evaluation meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards. Assessments were guided by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation (48 FR 44716, Sept. 29, 1983) and 36 CFR parts 60, 63, and 65. All recommendations are based on information available at the time the assessment was completed.

Burial #3 was evaluated as a potential contributing feature to the Manassas Battlefield Historic District for its ability to inform the understanding of Union soldier burials associated with the Second Battle of Manassas in the context of the National Register significance criterion D and pertinent integrity categories.

National Register Significance Criterion D. Burial #3 is within the Manassas Battlefield Historic District and is associated with a battlefield hospital (the John Dogan Farm) used by Union surgeons. The house is a contributing structure within the district. The National Register form for the district discusses burials under significance criterion D as having yielded, or being likely to yield, information important to Civil War history. Specifically, "The [district] is significant as the hallowed ground of the two Manassas battles, housing artifacts of the devastating engagements, entrenchments, encampments, and burial sites"

(Trieschmann 2005, p. 50). The National Register form states that the “battlefield retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association with the historic events that occurred on the property during the Civil War and the post-battle memorialization” (Trieschmann 2005, p. 46).

In the context of criterion D, battlefield burial sites are considered potential contributing features to a district and do not need to meet Criteria Consideration C, which establishes specific criteria for determining whether graves and cemeteries may be eligible for National Register listing (Andrus 1999, p. 11). Burial #3 is a 17 to 19 year-old Union soldier from New York that died during or shortly after the Second Battle of Manassas. He was buried in close proximity to a battlefield hospital in a pit containing amputated limbs.

Integrity. Manassas Battlefield retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. Battlefield burials, as archeological features, do not necessarily need to possess integrity of setting or feeling in a battlefield context to retain integrity (Andrus 1999, p. 12). However, completely excavated archeological sites generally must retain research potential or, in the case under review, an association with the location of the Battle of Second Manassas, and must retain the capacity to convey this association after excavation (National Park Service 1997, p.24).

The Manassas Battlefield National Register form does not define the essential physical features of burials that would be necessary to demonstrate integrity or describe which aspects of integrity are vital to a burial site. A brief discussion of burial integrity in the context of Manassas Battlefield follows.

Location: Prior to excavation, Burial #3 possessed integrity of location and was directly associated with a battlefield hospital that was in use during the Second Battle of Manassas. Because the burial has been removed, there is no longer a direct relationship between the human remains and the battleground or the hospital. While the human remains provide information about Union Army occupation and use of the area, the originating geographical location of the deceased soldier’s Army unit, and a potential cause of death, no further information can be derived through analysis. The research potential of the human remains is minimal, and the remains do not independently retain the capacity to convey an association with the location.

Setting: Integrity of setting has little application to Burial #3. Setting may be more applicable to the John Dogan Farm site in reference to the surrounding physical environment and character of the place in which the property played a role, especially given that the presence of burials was unknown prior to 2014.

Feeling: Like integrity of setting, integrity of feeling is more applicable to the John Dogan Farm site. An unmarked burial has little to contribute to this element of integrity.

Association: Burial #3 was unknown (unmarked) prior to its discovery in 2024. While there is an undeniable link to the Battle of Second Manassas, the burial’s physical relationship to natural and cultural features that form the surrounding landscape was removed when the burial was excavated. Burial #3 does not independently convey association with the Battle of Second Manassas in its current state.

Assessment of Archeological Interest. The facts presented establish that Burial #3 is not capable of contributing additional information that would further scientific or humanistic understandings of past human behavior, cultural adaptation, and related topics, and therefore does not warrant management as an archeological resource under ARPA.

The remains of Burial #3 are only 40% intact due to damage from plowing and waterline maintenance, and soil conditions that were not conducive to preservation. Minimal information about the age, height, and origin (New York) of this individual could be ascertained from osteological analysis, as well as a probable cause of death (a bullet wound to the neck). The osteologist performing the analysis stated that

additional chemical analysis of skeletal material would probably not yield new information.

When evaluating the physical relationship of Burial #3 with the other two burials and 16 amputated limbs in the burial/limb pit, researchers observed that interring compete human remains with amputated limbs was an aberration from Army directives and probably reflects a hasty departure from the area. This observation is informative in the sense that it conveys the urgency with which soldiers retreated, but the conclusion is also somewhat speculative and constrained by the generally poor condition of skeletal remains and disturbed context.

While Burial #3 has provided limited information about a Union hospital used during the Battle of Second Manassas, extracting additional information from the remains is unlikely. Removal of the remains from the original burial location eliminated integrity of location and association. It is recommended that Burial #3 no longer be managed as an ARPA archeological resource based on available facts contained in the technical reports upon which this assessment was made.

References

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