

America's Hidden Battlefields

Protecting the Archeological Story



**U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service Cultural Resources
American Battlefield Protection Program
& The Society for Historical Archaeology**



AMERICA'S battlefields teach us about some of the most important events in our history. We also value them because they

commemorate the selfless sacrifices made by our ancestors who fought there. They inspire us to contemplate the meaning of the battle, its causes, its cost, and consequences. They connect us to our past with such timeless virtues as duty, loyalty, honor, and courage, as well as cowardice, brutality, fear, and despair.

No battlefield stands today exactly as it did at the time of war. Many changes have taken place since that time. A cover of grass has grown. Fields have been planted. Fortifications have eroded, wood lots have been planted or cut down, and new buildings have been erected. Today's battlefield is a record not only of the conflict but also of change, some of which may be important in its own right. The battlefield we see today is a sum of many parts, all of which teach us about our past.

Look out over the land where warriors and soldiers bravely fought and died, the old farmhouse where the

Archeology

Fort Ticonderoga, New York, was abandoned shortly after the Revolutionary War. The ruins, above right, are shown as they appeared in 1905. Following extensive archeological investigations, the fort was reconstructed and opened to the public in 1909.

Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga) French and Indian War

Lake Champlain formed the most important part of the great waterway connecting New York and Canada. In 1755, the French selected a rocky ridge above Lake Champlain for a fort near present-day Ticonderoga, New York. Through 1756 and 1757 as many as 6,000 men cut timber, quarried stone, and built the outer works and barracks. On July 8, 1758, 16,000 British troops under Gen. James Abercromby attacked Fort Carillon but were repelled by Maj. Gen. the Marquis de Montcalm's 3,200 French troops. In 1759, Gen. Jeffrey Amherst's British force of 9,000 overpowered a French force of 2,800 to capture the fort after a four-day siege. The victorious British changed its name to Fort Ticonderoga. Following the American Revolution, the fort was ceded to the Americans.

BELOW British army encampment near Fort Carillon, after the battle of 1759.





Archeology

By the 1930s, modern-day San Antonio was "closing in" on the Alamo and its grounds. Archeological evidence documenting past events needs to be carefully protected for future generations.

wounded were treated by nurses and volunteers, the church on the hilltop where commanders planned their strategy, or the remnants of a fortification once so strong it held safe the future of a nation. You can almost see the bayonets flash, hear the guns and war cries, feel the cannon roar, and sense the bravery, pain, and suffering. Battlefields are special places because they evoke vivid images and awaken our shared emotions. Here is the sacred ground where we honor those who fought and feel a connection to our past. By visiting these sites, we gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for what took place.

There is more to a battlefield than immediately meets the eye. An important piece of this irreplaceable landscape is the reality of that long-ago battle that lies hidden underground.

This is the archeological evidence of the momentous and mundane events that took place here decades, hundreds, or even thousands of years ago. Through the protection, study, and interpretation of this evidence, we can enhance our own understanding of those events, and we can ensure that the battle, itself, is more than just a memory in an ever-changing world.

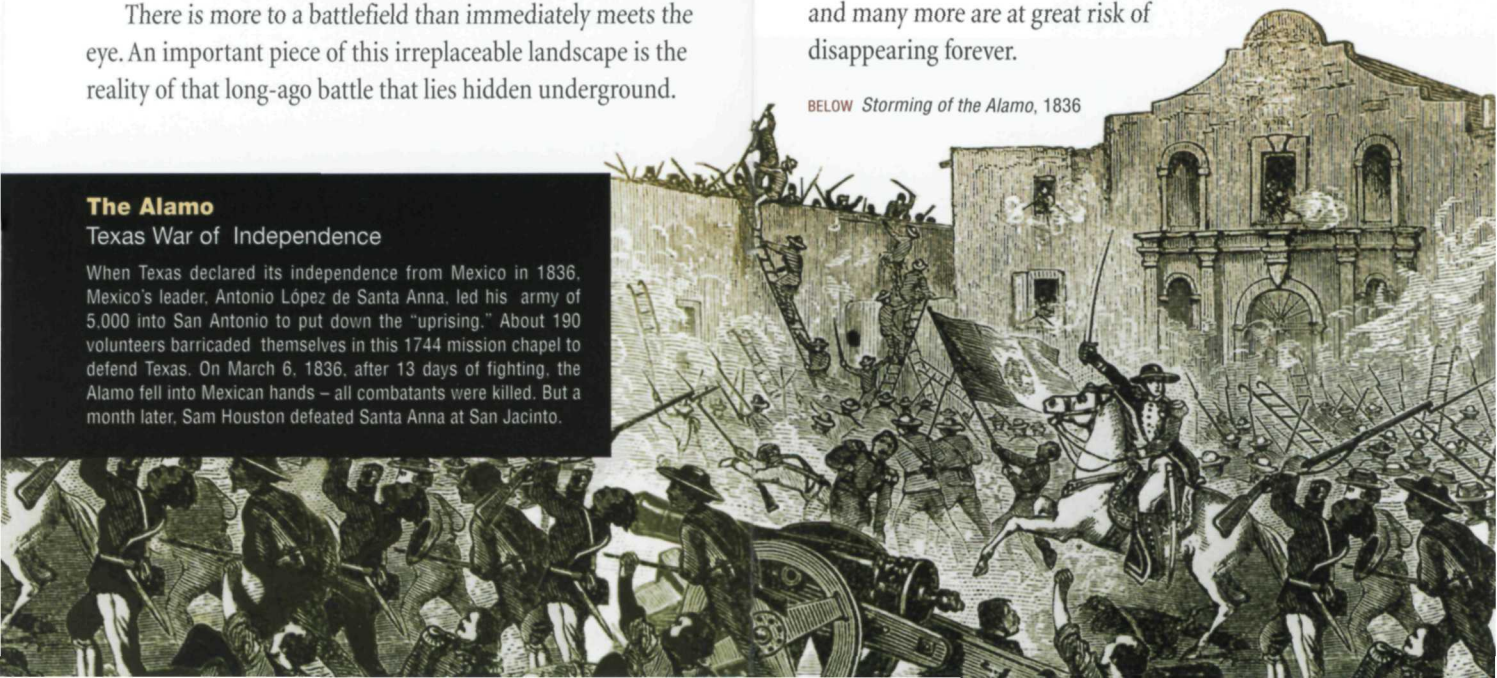
Preserving our historic battlefields is the only way to ensure that future generations of Americans will continue to value and learn from them. Unfortunately, many of these battlefields have already been destroyed and many more are at great risk of disappearing forever.

BELOW *Storming of the Alamo, 1836*

The Alamo

Texas War of Independence

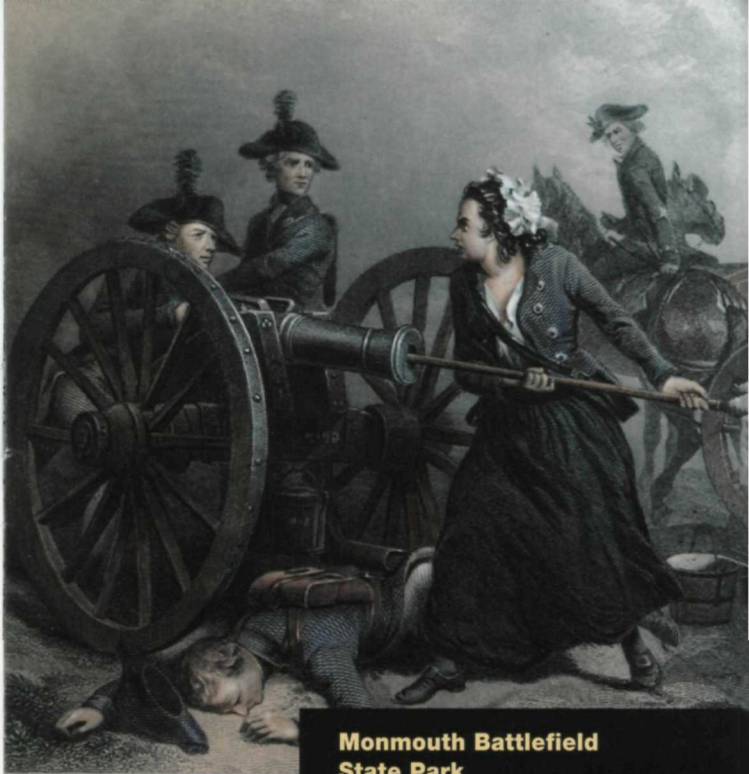
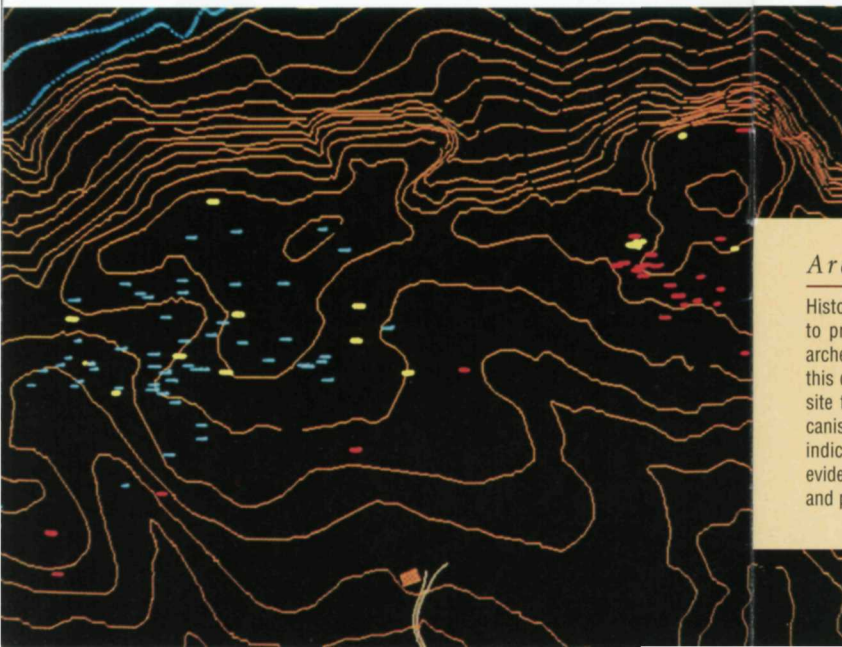
When Texas declared its independence from Mexico in 1836, Mexico's leader, Antonio López de Santa Anna, led his army of 5,000 into San Antonio to put down the "uprising." About 190 volunteers barricaded themselves in this 1744 mission chapel to defend Texas. On March 6, 1836, after 13 days of fighting, the Alamo fell into Mexican hands – all combatants were killed. But a month later, Sam Houston defeated Santa Anna at San Jacinto.



What we can learn from archeology

Archeology is the study of physical evidence found on the ground, underground, and underwater that past generations left behind. When archeologists examine a site, they map the location of what they find: human-made items and biological remains. Then, like good detectives, the archeologists must study all of these clues in the light of relevant information from other sources and turn these bits of evidence into a story that will help us come to a better understanding of the past. The archeologist's job is not complete until that story has been told. Sometimes, when this new light is shed on old events, we can see more clearly what really happened, not just what others *say* happened. When archeological evidence is combined with historical records, documents, maps, pictures, and oral traditions, we gain a more complete understanding of the past than if any of these research tools were used alone.

- Battle site topography
- Lead-canister fragments
- 2-oz. grapeshot
- Howitzer shrapnel



Monmouth Battlefield State Park

Revolutionary War

Gen. George Washington battled the British at Monmouth, New Jersey, in June of 1778 in the first American action after the terrible winter at Valley Forge. It was here that Molly Hays won fame as "Molly Pitcher," helping to operate Capt. Francis Proctor's 4-pounder field piece – the gun that is believed to have fired the canister and grapeshot illustrated in the map to the bottom left.

Archeology

Historical records and newly discovered archeological evidence are being used to produce an hour-by-hour account of the battle. Through computer-aided archeology, battle lines are accurately defined and artillery ordnance shown. On this computer-generated map of 153 acres at Monmouth Battlefield, the battle site topography is orange; blue is where archeologists have discovered lead-canister fragments; yellow represents the location of 2-oz. grapeshot; and red indicates howitzer shrapnel. Noting the distribution of military archeological evidence, researchers are able to track the previously undocumented British retreat and pinpoint the exact location of troop movement.



Archeology

At Manassas National Battlefield Park, archeologists investigating the fighting at Brawner Farm used high-tech remote sensing to clarify the location of 100 feet of firing line of the 19th Indiana Regiment. Archeologists believe this line represents the first firing line of the Regiment and that the second firing line is 80 or more feet to the rear of the first – much farther than some records indicated.

Archeology is especially important and useful in helping us to understand people and events about which little or nothing has been written. For example, many past civilizations left no written records, so archeology takes on paramount importance in our efforts to learn about those ancient peoples. In studying America's more recent past, archeology helps us to understand life as it was lived by everyday people, not just the powerful, the famous, and the rich about whom so much has been written. For instance, archeological study has contributed much to our growing understanding of the formative roles of women and minorities in our history; it has provided us with a valuable window on everyday life as we grew from a colonial frontier to an agricultural society to a world industrial power.

LEFT Federal Maj. Gen. Irvin McDowell

RIGHT Confederate Gen. Pierre Beauregard



BELOW Confederate fortifications at Manassas, 1862

Manassas National Battlefield Park Civil War

In 1861 and 1862, the Confederate army won two important victories at Manassas, Virginia. In the First Battle of Manassas, General McDowell's unseasoned Union troops fled from General Beauregard's equally inexperienced Confederates; in the Second Battle of Manassas, General Lee's victory over General Pope opened the way for the South's first invasion of the North.





These British mortar fragments from the 1814 attack recovered by archeologists teach us more about the battle and the people who fought it.



Archeology

During the 1997 restoration work on the V-shaped masonry ravelin wall at Fort McHenry, the original brick counter forts (support pillars) were uncovered, revealing archeological evidence of the 1813 construction techniques.



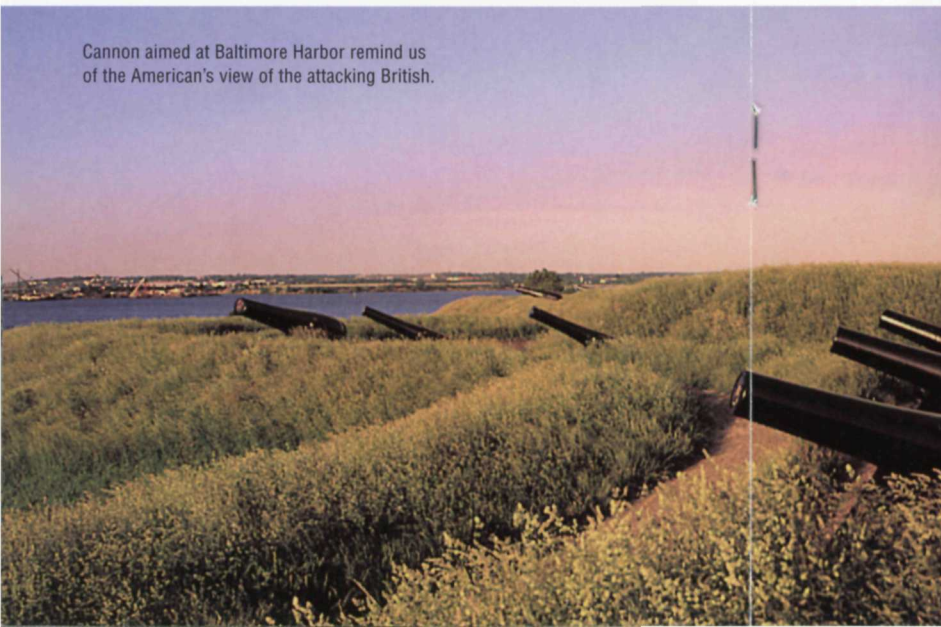
Archeology on the battlefield

When archeologists study a battlefield, our understanding of that battle often becomes clearer. An archeological study may reveal unmarked graves, bullets or cartridge cases, fragments of clothing, traces of lost roadways, old campsites, vanished buildings, lines of earthen fortifications, and even ships sunk in naval battles. Such evidence has been used to verify troop movements, map out battle actions in time and space, reveal previously unrecorded facets of the battles, and

even disprove long-believed myths or “official” accounts. Archeology offers us tangible, real evidence of soldiers waiting and fighting, advancing or retreating, constructing and defending fortifications, treating the wounded in hospitals, and burying the dead.

BELOW Looking into the fort toward the barracks. The cannon placed here are for interpretive purposes.

Cannon aimed at Baltimore Harbor remind us of the American's view of the attacking British.



Fort McHenry National Monument War of 1812

American soldiers in the famed star-shaped fort defended the City of Baltimore, Maryland, against the British fleet during the bombardment of September 13-14, 1814. The attack on Fort McHenry inspired Francis Scott Key to write “The Star Spangled Banner.”





Archeology

In 1988, archeologists excavated the battlefield gravesites of four soldiers killed during the Battle of Antietam. Only partial skeletal remains were present, indicating that postwar removal for reburial by the Department of War was incomplete. After analyzing the physical evidence and historical records, archeologists concluded that these soldiers belonged to the Union Army's famed Irish Brigade. More specifically, because of their position on the battlefield, the four were identified as members of the 63rd New York Infantry. New York State cuff buttons, unfired "buck-and-ball" rounds used in the New Yorker's .69 caliber muskets, and Catholic religious artifacts confirmed the identification. In 1989, their remains were reburied in Antietam National Cemetery with full military honors.

Archeological evidence is fragile

Archeological evidence on battlefields is fragile and is easily damaged or destroyed. Bulldozers grading fields, relic-hunters digging for treasure, and even well-meaning battlefield visitors walking in restricted areas can cause damage to the hidden battlefield and thus lessen our ability to learn more about the battle.

Without meaning to do harm, many visitors feel the need to collect artifacts from the historic battlefields they visit. They pick up objects from the ground in order to own a little bit of history. They may not realize that our ability to learn more about the battle from these artifacts also depends upon knowing precisely *where* on the battlefield the artifacts were discovered. So, taking souvenirs for one's own may be tempting, but it is wrong and is, in many cases, against the law.

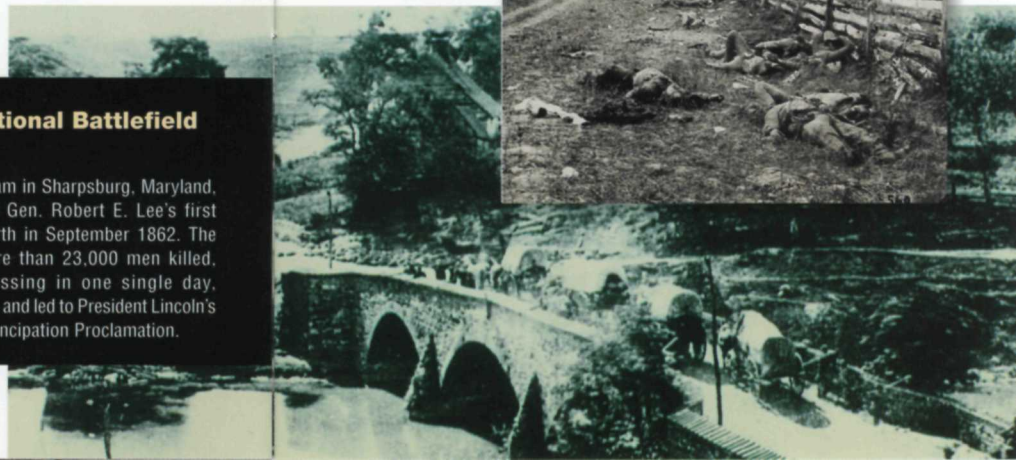
Even a planned archeological excavation unavoidably removes this crucial physical evidence from the scene. As a result, archeologists write detailed notes, draw accurate maps, take numerous photographs, and create extensive catalogs of recovered artifacts as they conduct their excavations – all to preserve the evidence and allow us to discover its full meaning. Today, archeologists rely increasingly on noninvasive, remote-sensing technologies to locate archeological resources in the field. Ground-penetrating radar, proton magnetometers, soil-resistivity meters, and other similar instruments measure variations in subsurface deposits to indicate man-made features and objects. This modern technology allows archeologists to make much more careful, efficient, and strategic decisions about when and where excavation is necessary.

Antietam National Battlefield Civil War

The Battle of Antietam in Sharpsburg, Maryland, marked the end of Gen. Robert E. Lee's first invasion of the North in September 1862. The battle claimed more than 23,000 men killed, wounded, and missing in one single day, September 17, 1862, and led to President Lincoln's issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation.

RIGHT Antietam Bridge, September 1862. Soldiers and wagons crossing the bridge.

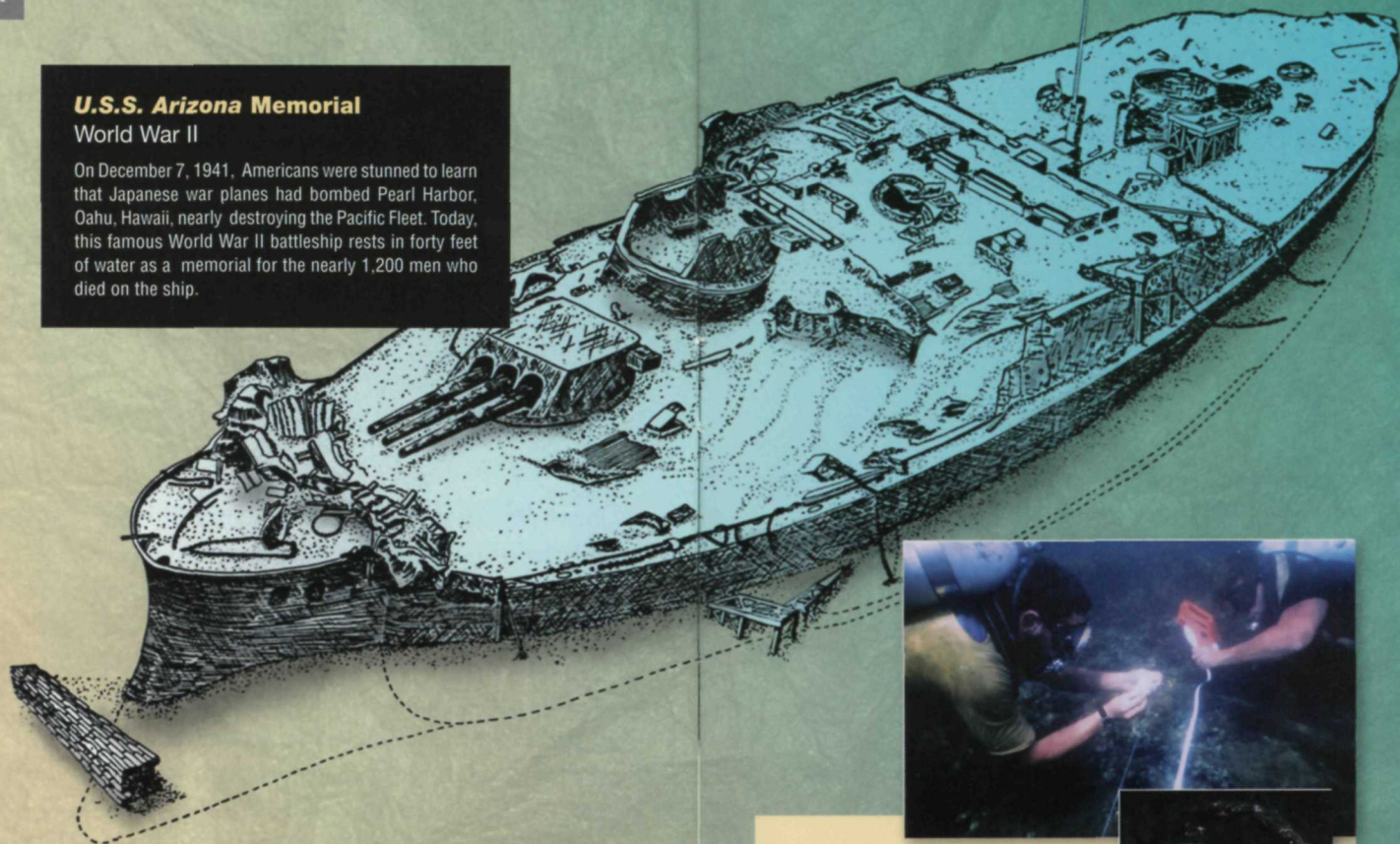
INSET Confederate dead at Antietam.



U.S.S. Arizona Memorial

World War II

On December 7, 1941, Americans were stunned to learn that Japanese war planes had bombed Pearl Harbor, Oahu, Hawaii, nearly destroying the Pacific Fleet. Today, this famous World War II battleship rests in forty feet of water as a memorial for the nearly 1,200 men who died on the ship.



Protecting Archeological Evidence

On lands owned by the federal, state, tribal, or local government, archeological resources of all kinds are generally protected by a variety of laws. For example, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act adopted by Congress prohibits any unauthorized excavation or removal of archeological remains from federal or tribal lands. Similarly, most states have enacted laws that require a state-issued permit for any archeological excavation on state-owned land. Some local governments have also enacted ordinances that match their state laws. Battlefields on federal, tribal, or state lands fall under the protection of all these laws.

On privately owned lands, excavation of archeological remains is subject to the property owner's consent, as well



Archeology

In the mid-1980s, the National Park Service and the U.S. Navy conducted an underwater archeological evaluation of the ship's condition. Divers were surprised to discover that the three 14-inch guns from turret Number One were still in place even though records of the 1942 salvage operations suggested otherwise. All live ordnance was removed. Other evidence documented by the divers dispelled the myth that the *U.S.S. Arizona* was destroyed by a Japanese bomb that went down her smoke stack. Instead, archeologists found damage from an armor-piercing bomb that had entered just forward of turret Number Two on the starboard side. The bomb detonated the entire forward magazine, causing the explosion that ultimately sank the *U.S.S. Arizona*.



as to any applicable state and local laws. Some local governments have adopted land-use ordinances that require or encourage the careful recovery of archeological information before private land is developed.



Archeology

Some Lakota and Cheyenne positions on the battlefield were in dispute with official Army records, mostly because historians in the past discounted Indian eyewitness accounts. When modern archeologists and historians reassessed the written accounts – which highlighted previously little known battle action – and verified them with archeological evidence, they were able to reinterpret disputed facts and confirm many of the Indian accounts.

TOP LEFT Archeologists surveying the rolling Montana battlefield site in the valley of the Little Big Horn River, known to the Indians as Greasy Grass.

MIDDLE LEFT *Battle of Little Big Horn* (detail) as seen by Sioux Chief Red Horse in a series of drawings completed five years after the battle.



Tatanka-lyotanka (Sitting Bull)
Hunkpapa medicine man, military
tactician, and a leader of the Sioux

It is important to say a special word about human burials. On federal and tribal lands, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act is complemented by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act to provide enhanced protection for Native American burials. Even on privately owned lands, graves are generally afforded some level of protection by state and local laws. While such laws routinely govern the operations of active cemeteries, it is also true that in many states historic, abandoned, and even unmarked cemeteries and individual graves are protected.

Violating any of these laws is a crime. Individuals convicted of breaking these laws can face serious penalties, including significant fines and jail sentences.

Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument Indian Wars of 1870s

Near Hardin, Montana, on June 25-26, 1876, Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer and about 260 troops of the 7th U.S. Cavalry faced as many as 2,000 Lakota and Cheyenne warriors. Custer and all of the men of five companies under his immediate command were killed.



"But in a larger sense we can not dedicate -- we can not consecrate -- we can not hallow, this ground -- the brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have hallowed it, far above our poor power to add or detract."

Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*

What you can do

You can help safeguard American's historic battlefields by working in partnership with professional archeologists, park managers, local historical and preservation groups, and state historic preservation officers. When visiting a historic battlefield, you can contribute significantly to its preservation if you remember to:

- Follow marked paths and avoid walking on marked archeological sites or on earthworks or other above-ground features such as walls and ruins.
- Leave in place any object you see on the ground and do not dig on the battlefield.
- Report archeological materials you see on the ground, evidence of site vandalism, and any suspicious activity to the park manager or your state historic preservation office.

You also help protect and preserve America's historic battlefields when you:

- Join a battlefield friends group or a local archeological society.
- Contribute financial support to battlefield parks and preservation organizations.
- Educate your local and state-elected officials about the need to protect and study battlefields.
- Volunteer to help an archeologist conduct surveys, record sites, and keep watch on sites.
- Do not support treasure hunters and collectors by purchasing illegally taken artifacts.

These battlefields are real. They, and only they, can provide the answers to many of the questions about America's military past. It is important for us to take care in our own actions and encourage others to join us in safeguarding the physical evidence of battle, both above ground and below ground. We must respect these sites for all they can teach and for all they represent. ➤✱➤

ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

- pp. 2-3: British army encampment. Plate from *Fort Ticonderoga: A Short History*, by S.H.P. Pell, 1935. National Historic Landmarks Program, NPS.
 pp. 4-5: *Storming of the Alamo*. Denver Public Library Western Collection. National Historic Landmarks Program, NPS.
 p. 7: *Molly Pitcher at Monmouth*. National Archives and Records Administration.
 pp. 14-15: The sunken U.S.S. *Arizona*. Submerged Cultural Resource Unit, NPS.
 p. 16: *Battle of Little Big Horn*. National Archives and Records Administration.

PHOTO CREDITS (listed counter-clockwise as they appear on each 2-page spread)

- Cover: Brandy Station. Photo: Eric Long. American Battlefield Protection Program, NPS.
 pp. 2-3: Fort Ticonderoga reconstructed. Photo: Charles W. Snell. National Historic Landmarks Program, NPS; Section of Fort Ticonderoga ruins. Plate from *The Bulletin of The Fort Ticonderoga Museum*, Vol. VIII, No. 6, 1950.
 pp. 4-5: Alamo in the 1930s. Photo: Arthur W. Stewart, April 1936. Historic American Buildings Survey, NPS.
 pp. 6-7: *Topographic readout map*. Photo: Daniel M. Sivilich. Monmouth Battlefield State Park.
 pp. 8-9: Archeologist at Manassas National Battlefield Park, NPS; Civil War Generals. National Archives and Records Administration; Confederate fortifications with soldiers. National Archives and Records Administration.
 pp. 10-11: British mortar fragments. Fort McHenry National Monument, NPS; Fort McHenry cannons, American Battlefield Protection Program, NPS; Fort McHenry. Photo: W.E. Dutton. *Parks & History Association*; Archeologists at Fort McHenry. Fort McHenry National Monument, NPS.
 pp. 12-13: Archeologists at Antietam National Battlefield, NPS; Antietam Bridge. National Archives and Records Administration; Confederate dead at Antietam. Library of Congress.
 p. 15: Underwater archeologists; eating utensils, Southeast Archeological Center, NPS.
 pp. 16-17: Archeologists at Little Big Horn Battlefield National Monument, NPS. Tatanka-lyotanka (Sitting Bull). National Archives and Records Administration.
 p. 18: Shaw Memorial by Augustus Saint-Gaudens; detail of Negro soldiers in the Fifty-Fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, NPS.

Who We Are

The National Park Service's **American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP)** leads a federal grants program aimed at helping communities identify, assess, and protect our nation's historic battlefields. Since 1990 the ABPP and its grantees have helped protect and enhance more than 60 battlefields by cosponsoring more than 130 projects across the United States. Visit the ABPP web site at <http://www2.cr.nps.gov/abpp/>.

The Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA) promotes scholarly research and the dissemination of knowledge concerning historical archaeology on land and underwater. Formed in 1967, SHA is the largest scholarly group concerned with the archaeology of the modern world (A.D. 1400-present). Visit the SHA web site at <http://www.sha.org/>.

Learn More About Archeology

Archeology, History, and Custer's Last Battle: The Little Big Horn Reexamined by Richard Allen Fox. (1993) University of Oklahoma Press.

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For More Information

U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service

Heritage Preservation Services
The American Battlefield
Protection Program
1849 C Street, NW, NC 330
Washington, DC 20240

Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites

11 Public Square, Suite 200
Hagerstown, MD 21740

Civil War Trust

2101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 1120
Arlington, VA 22201

**The Conservation Fund
Civil War Battlefield Campaign**
1800 North Kent Street
Arlington, VA 22209

Council on America's Military Past
P.O. Box 1151
Ft. Myer, VA 22211-0151

Society for Historical Archaeology
P.O. Box 30446
Tucson, AZ 85751

State Historic Preservation Officers
c/o The National Conference of State
Historic Preservation Officers
Hall of States, Suite 342
444 North Capitol Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-1512



**SOCIETY for
HISTORICAL
ARCHAEOLOGY**

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