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A Connecticut Yankee in Jeff Davis's Court

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Abstract

For the past ten weeks or so, I have been interning at [Richmond National Battlefield Park](#). The experience has been like no other. I began the summer with a few goals. First, I wanted to see if working for the National Park Service was everything that my fellow park geeks said it was. Second, I wanted to enrich my understanding of the Civil War by focusing my study on one particular community's experience in the Civil War (Richmond). Third, as a born-and-raised New Englander, I wanted to see what it was like to spend a summer in Dixie. Finally, I wanted to have fun. I am happy to say that all four goals were achieved.

[excerpt]

Keywords

Gettysburg College, Civil War, Yankee, the National Park Service, Richmond, Confederacy, history

Disciplines

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This blog post originally appeared in [The Gettysburg Compiler](#) and was created by students at Gettysburg College.

THE GETTYSBURG COMPILER

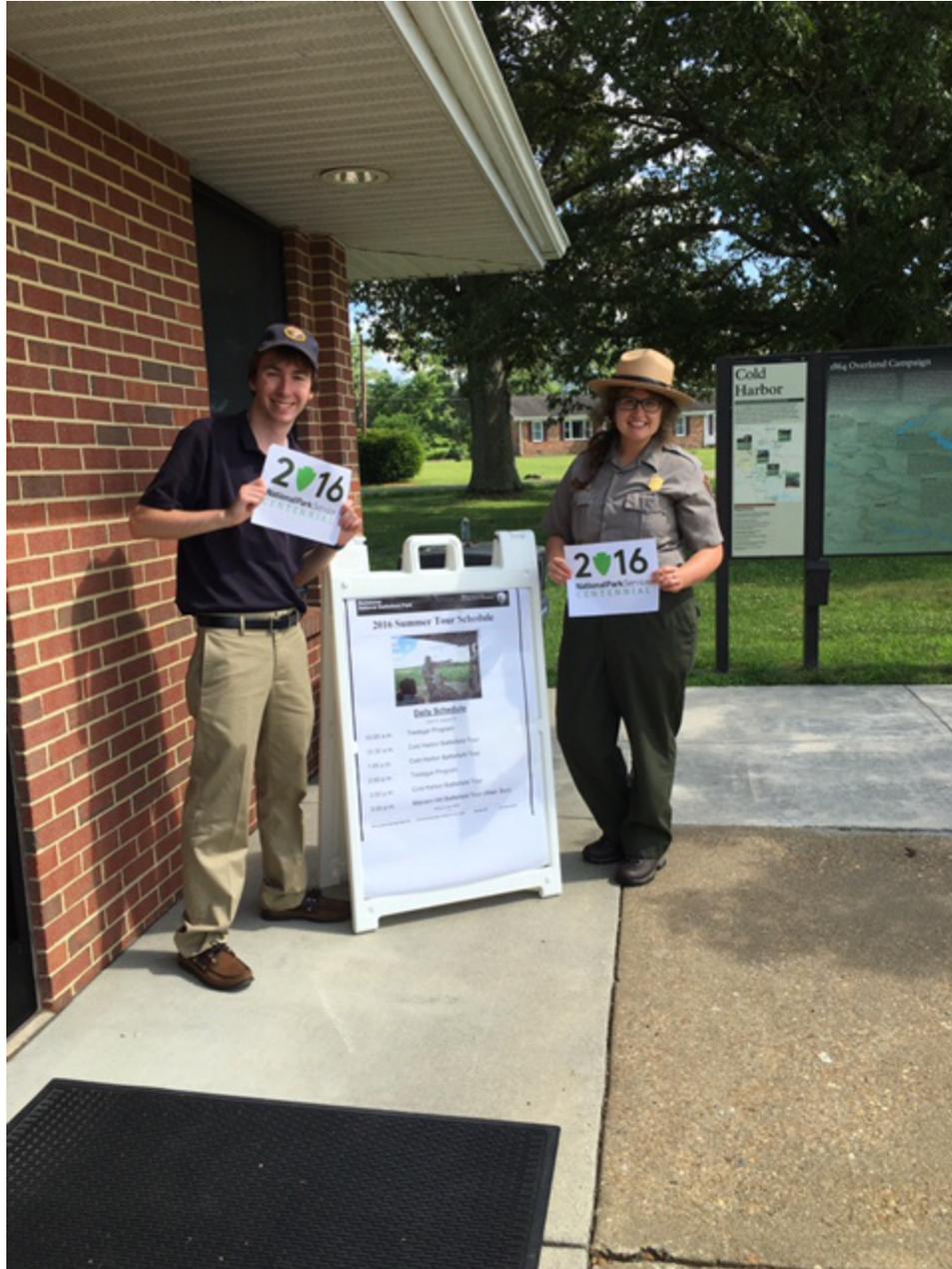
ON THE FRONT LINES OF HISTORY

A Connecticut Yankee in Jeff Davis's Court

This post is part of a series featuring behind-the-scenes dispatches from our [Pohanka Interns](#) on the front lines of history this summer as interpreters, archivists, and preservationists. See [here](#) for the introduction to the series.

By Jeffrey Lauck '18

For the past ten weeks or so, I have been interning at [Richmond National Battlefield Park](#). The experience has been like no other. I began the summer with a few goals. First, I wanted to see if working for the National Park Service was everything that my fellow park geeks said it was. Second, I wanted to enrich my understanding of the Civil War by focusing my study on one particular community's experience in the Civil War (Richmond). Third, as a born-and-raised New Englander, I wanted to see what it was like to spend a summer in Dixie. Finally, I wanted to have fun. I am happy to say that all four goals were achieved.



Jeffrey Lauck at Cold Harbor.

At first, I was skeptical that I would end the summer as excited about the National Park Service as I was when the summer began. I thought that perhaps the rusticity of park housing, the endless government forms, and the sheer difficulty of some visitors would run me down and pop my balloon of excitement. Luckily, I was proven wrong. While all of these could at times impede my excitement, there were plenty of highlights to keep me going. Somehow, the joy on a newly inducted Junior Ranger's face or a visitor who just found out where their ancestor had fought made the lack of quality Wi-Fi in seasonal quarters and the long distance from home worth it.

Working with the Park's social media also allowed me to combine my passion for the Park Service and history with my love of Instagram and Facebook. Best of all, I was able to get some experience in running a professional Instagram and Facebook page – a job skill that I am sure will pay off in the not-so-distant future. Finally, I was able to fulfill my dream of becoming a drummer boy by borrowing the park's period drum and putting together a fife and drum presentation with a ranger who happened to be a fifer. While I know that I only got a glimpse of what it is like to work for the National Park Service, from what I could observe it definitely seems like the career for me.



Jeffrey Lauck participates in a fife and drum presentation at Richmond National Battlefield Park.

The summer was not just about wearing an arrowhead hat and showing visitors where the bathrooms are. I now know more than I ever wanted to know about the battles around Richmond. I have a much better understanding of what life was like in the Confederate capital and the Confederacy as a whole – a subject that I knew very little about before this summer.

Thanks to training and experience, I also have a much better grasp on the fundamentals of interpretation and what it means to communicate well with visitors. Living in a new area (especially the South) as well as talking with many diverse visitors has broadened my perspectives on the Civil War and the world in which we live in today. I even spent an entire day with a group of fire-eating Confederate reenactors while photographing a living history event for the park. Needless to say, there was a bit of culture clash there. While I cannot say that I have had a major change in worldview, I at least now can relate to many other people better and understand how some people may view the Civil War and our modern world in different ways. Most importantly, I had fun. I have made many friends both among my fellow interns as well as with rangers. I was also able to enjoy many of the historic sites around Richmond in my free time. I believe I have made the most of my time here.

From photographing living history events to giving tours at Cold Harbor, from helping out with the park's social media to swearing in new Junior Rangers, it has been a very busy summer. Even though summer is supposed to be about relaxation, I must say that I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in Richmond.

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