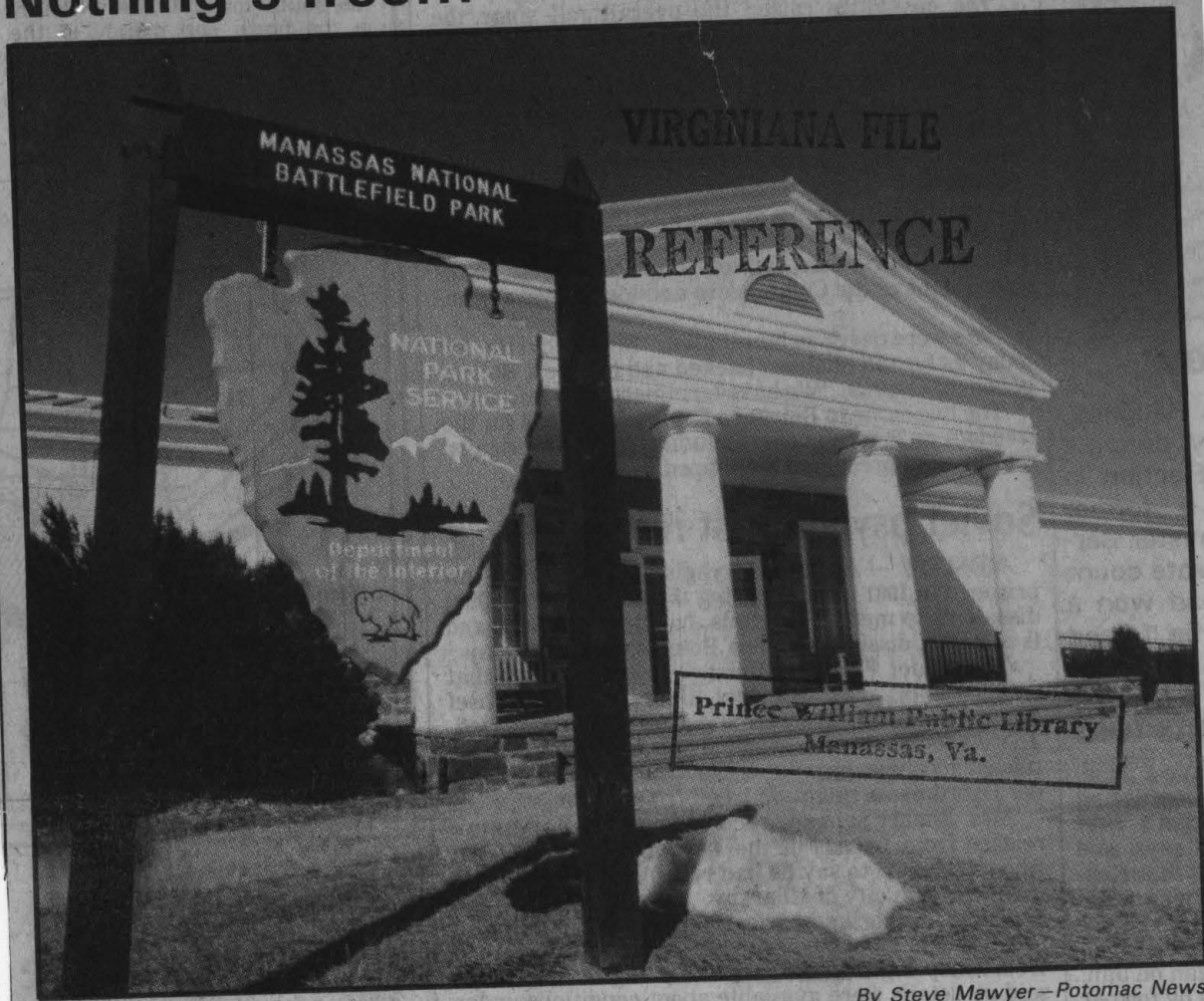


Nothing's free... PWC-PARKS



By Steve Mawyer - Potomac News

The Manassas National Battlefield Park will begin charging a \$1 fee to individuals and \$3 to families visiting the park. The U.S. Park Service announced this week that the park is one of 72 parks and monuments where fees will be instituted.

No more free roaming at Manassas battlefield park

By RUTH LARSEN
of the Potomac News

The Manassas National Battlefield Park, as well as other federal attractions across the country, will not be free for the seeing after Feb. 26.

The U.S. Park Service announced Thursday that it will begin charging entrance fees at 72 of its parks and monuments — six in the Washington area — bringing to 134 the number of parks nationwide that collect such fees.

At the battlefield park, 4,525 acres of rolling meadows and woodlands near Interstate 66 and Va. 29, visitors will pay \$1 per person or \$3 per family for a seven-day pass. An annual pass will cost \$10.

The other regional parks that will charge fees are Antietam National Battlefield, Fort Washington, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Great Falls Park and Ford's Theater. Skyline Drive will also in-

crease its entrance fees.

An estimated 793,000 people visited the Battlefield Park last year, and U.S. Park Service officials are confident that fees won't significantly reduce those numbers, they said.

For history buffs, the battlefield, site of the first and second battles of Manassas, will hold its attraction despite the fees.

Reaction to entrance fees has been mixed. Some local park visitors regret the action, but say it is an unfortunate necessity.

"The federal government is aiming its budget dollar at defense and military spending," said Doug Harvey, curator of the Manassas City Museum. "Many of the national parks are under-budgeted and undermanned. This fee is simply to get enough money to keep the parks running. It's just real sad, billions for B-1 bombers."

Last year, Congress agreed to advance \$54 million to the U.S.

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Fee plan upsets park resident

By RUTH LARSEN
of the Potomac News

Retired Manassas educator B. Oswald Robinson lives in a sprawling stone house on eight acres now encompassed by the Manassas National Battlefield Park.

On Thursday, the U.S. Park Service announced it will begin charging entrance fees at the 4,525-acre battlefield park and five other parks in the National Capital Region, starting next week.

Robinson vehemently opposes the change, fearing it will stifle visits to the park and change his life style.

"I sold this land to the government with a lifetime tenancy for myself and my wife. Are they

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going to charge me every time I go to the garden? Are they going to charge me a dollar to walk over to the monuments? Our world is getting too greedy."

"My daddy would turn over in his grave," said Robinson, 77, a third-generation resident whose family settled on 484 acres here just after the Civil War.

That land, now owned by the U.S. Park Service, earned its place in history as the site of the First and Second battles of Manassas, bloody confrontations in 1861 and 1862 that ended with Confederate victories, and sounded the warning of a long war ahead.

The first white explorers found land now encompassed by the park occupied by the Manahoacs, a nomadic Indian hunting tribe, who migrated from what is now southern Ohio.

The tribe's practice of burning forests created grass-covered

plains. The plains attracted buffalo, giving the Indians a dependable food source.

The park is still predominately open, rolling countryside.

Union veteran and Manassas Town Council member George C. Round initiated the drive to establish the battlefield sites as a national park. During the 1893-1897 administration of President Grover Cleveland, the Secretary of War was ordered to investigate the possibility.

He spoke with Round, who wanted to protect the Bull Run and Groveton monuments, erected on private property soon after the war to mark the battlefields for early sightseers.

On Dec. 1, 1901 Round urged Congress to acquire title to land around the Bull Run and Groveton monuments. A bill appropriating \$25,000 for that purpose was first introduced to Congress in 1902. But it was not until 1913 that President William Howard Taft signed a bill authorizing the Secretary of War to purchase

land surrounding the monuments at a reasonable price.

Eight years later, the Sons of Confederate Veterans bought the Henry farm. On July 21, 1921, the Manassas Battlefield Confederate Park was dedicated.

By 1940, the Park Service had acquired 1,475 acres, including the 128-acre Henry tract donated by the Sons of Confederate Veterans, and proclaimed the land the Manassas National Battlefield Park.

Today, the battlefield park is primarily visited by residents of the Metropolitan area, according to the park's General Management Plan.

The plan says it attracts history buffs, who spend an average of five hours hiking about the many battle sites; the recreational tourist, who jogs, rides horseback, hikes, watches birds and fishes; and the general visitor, who typically spends fewer than two hours at the park, most of that time at the Visitor's Center, the Henry House and the monument of Stonewall Jackson.

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Park Service to improve parks all over the country on the condition that it charge fees to reimburse the U.S. Treasury, said George Kyle, deputy chief of public service.

"The logic is based on the fact that appropriated money comes from everybody's taxes. If someone goes to the parks more than someone else, they should pay a little more," he said.

The program expires Oct. 1, but Congress included a proposal in its fiscal year 1988 budget to extend fee collections, Kyle said.

Signs directing visitors to the park's visitor's center will be posted at all entrances. The park will hire three workers to collect fees, build a toll booth for \$5,000

and buy cash registers and other equipment for a total start-up cost of about \$26,800.

Nationwide, overhead costs are expected to hit about \$15 million, said Earle Kittleman, spokesman for the park service's National Capital Region.

The Battlefield Park expects to generate about \$142,400 in collection revenue. The extra money likely will be used to make expensive repairs to the Stone House, a two-story tavern that served as a field hospital during both Civil War battles. Another high-priority project is replacing the old mortar on the Stone Bridge, a \$10,000-a-year job that began five years ago, said Park Superintendent Rolland Swain.

He has maintained the park with an annual budget of about \$500,000 since 1980. That money

pays for upkeeping six miles of rail fence, seasonal mowing alongside the fence, servicing 75 garbage cans, a 35-table picnic area and the Visitor's Center. It also pays salaries for 17 full-time and six seasonal workers.

Of the 793,000 people who visited last year — the most ever recorded — about 30 percent were from Virginia, according to a log at the visitor's center.

"It's worth it, but it's a shame," said Vicki Ferris of Manassas, who spent Wednesday at the park with her parents, who are visiting from out of town. She said her family visits the park about twice a year, but that she will likely cut back because of the fees.

"I think parks should be free," said Tim Pringle, visiting the park from Alabama.