

South Carolina

General Information and Field Trip Ideas

Charleston Area

Many know the story of the secession fever that gripped the state and the city, resulting in the signing here on Dec. 20, 1860, the document that took South Carolina out of the Union. And most can tell the story of the first shots fired at Fort Sumter a few months later. But Charleston's Civil War story didn't end in the spring of 1861.



The Bombardment of Fort Sumter

Many serious Union attempts were made to capture or cut off the city, which became one of the leading ports for blockade runners. Battles on land and sea were fought within a few miles of the city's famous waterfront. But the Confederates managed to hold Charleston until February 1865, suffering periodic shelling from long-range Union guns.

Despite the bombardment and a great wartime fire, much of the city's historic fabric remains. The old neighborhoods in Charleston offer one of the best walking experiences in the country. Streets are lined with antebellum homes and historic churches, most having some association with the city's Civil War history. Fort Sumter is always visible from the waterfront promenades where, more than 140 years ago, people watched the war begin.

Beaufort Area

Located between strongly defended Confederate ports at Charleston and Savannah, the Port Royal Sound area was a natural for Federal occupation early in the war. The Union navy required a base to maintain its blockading fleet and the deep-water Port Royal Sound fit the bill perfectly. On Nov. 7, 1861, a large Union flotilla blasted Confederate fortifications at the mouth of the Sound, routing the

outgunned defenders. More than 12,000 Union infantry then occupied Hilton Head, the surrounding sea islands, and the small town of Beaufort. Slaves soon flocked to this new Union beachhead -- and to freedom. The influx of thousands of blacks provided challenges for the occupiers and opportunities for the ex-slaves. In what some consider a dry-run for Reconstruction, "The Port Royal Experiment" provided educational and other material help for the freedmen. Many of the ex-slaves joined the Union armed forces. Robert Smalls, born a slave in Beaufort, gained fame by hijacking a Union steamer in Charleston Harbor and delivering it to the Union fleet. Smalls was elected to Congress from Beaufort after the war.



The Battle for Port Royal Sound

Central Area

Sherman and many of his officers and troops looked forward to exacting revenge on South Carolina, birthplace of the Confederacy and scene of the first shots fired at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. Sherman predicted his march through South Carolina would be "one of the most horrible things in the history of the world." For many, it was. Sherman's soldiers left Savannah and began marching into South Carolina on Feb. 1, 1865.



Sherman

Confederate resistance was ineffectual and Sherman's army and its legions of "bummers" burned most of a dozen towns and uncounted barns, farmsteads and plantations on his month-long tear through the state.



Field Trip Ideas

Charleston Battles
Charleston & Savannah
Sherman's March
Rivers Bridge State Park
Parris Island
Beaufort
Charlestown Civilian Life during the Civil War

Do not limit your ideas to these call and we will discuss many options.

Call 1-888-681-5333