

**Francesca Cusack, History Teacher, Cape Cod Regional Technical High School, Gettysburg**

Thanks to the generous contribution from The Westgate Fund, I was able to participate in the American Battlefield Trust 2025 Teacher Symposium in Gettysburg, PA. This was an incredibly fulfilling experience for me as a history teacher. Instead of a broad overview of a topic, this symposium was an experience offering deeper learning about some of the most difficult battles that took place during the American Civil War. We marched the "Fishhook," which was a consequential battle route on the fields in Gettysburg, and we marched (in tight knit formation) the failed Pickett's Charge, all while learning the consequences of each battle taking place over the 3-day Battle of Gettysburg.

While taking part in experiencing battle marches of Gettysburg, my fellow teachers and I were also able to experience some of the most incredible viewings of authentic Civil War artifacts. We were taken behind the scenes into the Archive Room of the National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg, PA. This room is not open to the public, so we were very fortunate. I was able to hold General Custer's pistol, read up close letters to and from Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, and view primary source documents from numerous witnesses to events surrounding the war. Most awe-inspiring in this part of the museum were the walls and shelving of the boots worn, the rifles and bayonets used, the gear used for eating and drinking, and the uniforms. These were not representations, but the actual artifacts. This was both inspiring and emotional. The museum went on to further highlight the impact of people's daily lives during the war, African American contributions, slavery, Civil War medicine, and so many other incredible historical treasures from such an indescribably fractious event that our nation managed to survive.

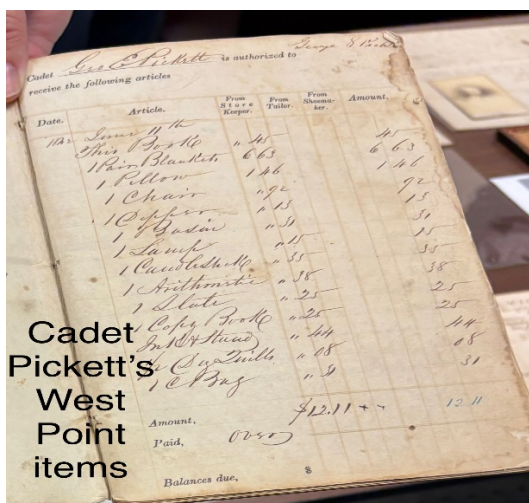
Finally, the teaching resources that I was able to take back with me are wonderful. Just a few examples include "step-in photo lessons and videos" (this enables a teacher to place themselves into photos and videos, the "Bobblehead George Videos" - this is where a history teacher who presented at the symposium shared his history videos and other resources that he makes traveling the country, and "[seminaryridge.org](https://seminaryridge.org)" - this went deep into Civil War medicine (including the Jonathan Letterman Medical System) and visual displays of what a make-shift hospital looked like. I cannot express enough how valuable an experience this was for me. I was also lucky enough to apply for and will be receiving the "Revolutionary War Travelling Trunk" through American Battlefield Trust. This is a trunk full of Revolutionary War era clothing and other items representative of the time. It is meant for students to have hands-on learning while they learn about the Revolutionary War. This is a good time for this as we are to be celebrating the 250th anniversary of America. Therefore, "America 250" lesson planning will include this trunk for both our freshmen and sophomores in our US History classes.

Please enjoy the following photos:



Gettysburg, PA  
Battlefield site by  
Historical Society

The first photo is of me standing outside the Adams County Historical Society. This is where we had our Teacher Symposium. Right outside was a large portion of battlefield that has been preserved. The cannon is a replica that fires.



Cadet  
Pickett's  
West  
Point  
items

The second photo is a booklet from West Point Academy where Class of 1846 Cadet (and future Confederate General), George Pickett, received a list of articles he was to receive. This book was viewed as we toured the Archive Room at the National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg, PA.



Civil War rifles

The third photo shows just a portion of the wall of rifles in the archive room of The National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg, PA. These are authentic and have been restored.