

241126 BRA NATIONAL COLONIAL FARM

A partner of the National Park Service in Piscataway Park, the Foundation stewards 200 acres of park while honoring the indigenous people and values that shaped this land. The farm is located in Maryland north of Indian head. It is also directly across the river from Mount Vernon on the Potomac.



The name is a bit misleading. You would expect to find colonial structures, architecture, or other assemblage that's the name implies, but the focus of the farm is colonial in other aspects.



The farm is in fact, a 200 acre agricultural experimental station. It hosts livestock which are of breeds that date back to colonial times. It also practices farming and horticultural techniques that replicate those used in colonial times.



We visited in late November and the weather was beautiful. The crops at that point had all been harvested. Livestock were in the transition to winter forage. It was nice to walk around

the site and it's extremely peaceful. Many people were also present simply walking for exercise or with pets.



I don't know why kids are drawn to animals, any animals. You take them to a national historical site and while you are looking at all the history, they are focused on petting the livestock. But, the goats and sheep at the site were extremely friendly, which means they've had a lot of human contact. It also means that people have been feeding them which we did not.



One of the animals on display were colonial milk cows. When I first read this, I asked myself; “colonial cow? You mean, there’s a difference between a colonial cow and a contemporary cow?” In fact, an indeed there was. This is the whole purpose of the site. They are preserving, researching, and determining the current viability of using colonial species of goats, sheep, cows, and other animals. Unfortunately, we did not take images, but they had chicken and turkey as well.



The structures at the site were very old. It’s not certain that they date back to colonial times, but they certainly date well into the 19th century. Some of the wood treatment on the barn was unlike I’ve ever seen. These are extremely old structures. There was no information at the site is to the origin of the structures, whether they were indigenous to the site, or disassembled and moved here. But they are authentic.



The inside of the structures were bare. There was not much in the form of furniture or reproductions of life at that time. I don't think that was the purpose of the site, nor of the buildings. But they did add a certain degree of authenticity to the colonial farm and made the experience much more organic. You can imagine that going to a site like this without these old, semi historical buildings would not have been the same experience.



You look at structures like this and with the chill in the air can only imagine what it must've been like to go through a winter. It always interest me that not only here but in no other historical building that I've ever seen can you find insulation on the walls. I don't know what they could have used in the day, but there simply was no attempt to insulate the inside from the outside. These buildings must've been bitterly cold. There was no fire. And there was no fire unless someone kept burning continuously.



There is a substantial public dock and boat launch at the park. The Potomac is tidal in this area so there are plenty of opportunities to catch fish of all varieties. Directly across the river has mentioned was a Mount Vernon. One of George Washington's most profitable enterprises was fishing in the Potomac. It is stated historically that George Washington harvested millions of fish per year from the Potomac.



On the day we visited we found five people fishing. They were very proud of themselves and showed us their catch. It was mostly catfish but good size specimens. We finished the day on the dock and soon were on our way back to our homes.

I'm always amazed that we don't visit these odd, out-of-the-way sites. It's always an opportunity to get out there and do something. Growing up in the late 60s and 70s with no Internet the great outdoors was the worldwide web. It was good to get my grandkids out and see something different. This park does not offer Mini amenities, nor does it have glitzy or polished displays. It is very basic and utilitarian in nature, but still worth the visit. I would recommend it on a spectacular, crisp, cold, bright day in November. It's worth your time.



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