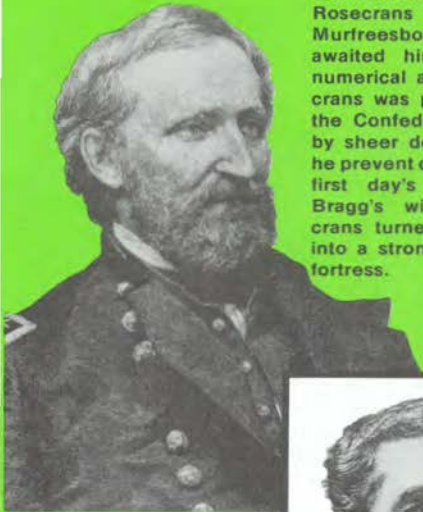


stones river

William Rosecrans (1819-1898) took command of the new Army of the Cumberland and was given the task of pursuing Bragg in the struggle for control of the region. After gathering supplies at Nashville in case his communications should be cut, Rosecrans moved towards Murfreesboro where Bragg awaited him. Despite his numerical advantage Rosecrans was pressed hard by the Confederates and only by sheer determination did he prevent defeat during the first day's fighting. After Bragg's withdrawal Rosecrans turned Murfreesboro into a strong, well-supplied fortress.



Braxton Bragg (1817-1876) was given the assignment of moving his Confederate army into Kentucky in hopes that its presence would bring that State into the Confederacy. The plan failed and Bragg retreated into Tennessee where he awaited the approach of the Union forces. After the engagement at Stones River, Bragg withdrew, not defeated but not victorious. Six months later Bragg and Rosecrans met for a rematch at Chickamauga where Bragg was victorious. Bragg was energetic but not persistent, sometimes vague in carrying out his well-made plans.



THE STRUGGLE FOR MIDDLE TENNESSEE

In mid-February 1862 the Union army in Tennessee under Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant captured Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River and nearby Fort Henry on the Tennessee. By late February, Union troops had captured Nashville without a shot, the first Confederate State capital to fall. In April Grant won again at Shiloh. In October Gen. Braxton Bragg retreated from Perryville, Ky., and concentrated his Confederate army at Murfreesboro, Tenn., for the winter. Maj. Gen. William Rosecrans, leading another Union army, followed Bragg from Kentucky as far as Nashville. The two large armies were fighting for control of Middle Tennessee's railroads and rich farms.

On December 26, 1862, Rosecrans, with 43,000 men, moved out of Nashville, intending to sweep Bragg and his force of 38,000 aside and drive on to Chattanooga. Four days later Federal forces neared Murfreesboro. Bragg's army had been found.

Within sight of each other the two armies camped, readying for battle. As the fires flickered and the sentries tramped, the mood was tense but there was no firing. Tonight was the time to snatch a few hours sleep and, if possible, a few moments of pleasure. Somewhere along the line an army band struck up a patriotic air. From the opposing side came the chords of a rejoinder, and soon the hills resounded with "Hail Columbia" battling "Bonnie Blue Flag," and "Dixie" trying to drown out "Yankee Doodle." "Some band struck up "Home Sweet Home," and the tough westerners of both armies who sneered at the eastern "parade ground soldiers" began to sing the bittersweet song that brought back memories of home and family. Voices faded as "Tattoo" called for lights out in the frosty camps.

At dawn on December 31, 1862, the Confederates charged the Union right flank. There was no music now, just the roar of musketry and the deep boom of cannon as the onslaught sent the Federals reeling backward through the dense cedar thickets that covered the battlefield. The noise was so intense that Confederate soldiers paused in their attack to stuff their ears with cotton.

By 10 a.m. the Union line had been driven back almost to the Nashville Pike but there the Federals held, under orders from "Old Rosy" to "contest every inch of ground." And contest it they did, beating off attack after attack with cannon and rifle and with bayonet and clubbed musket when the ammunition ran out. Rosecrans brought in reserves and by late afternoon had established a new line along the pike. The day's fighting sputtered to a close.

There were no band concerts that night, and no one celebrated New Year's Eve. The two armies remained in position the next day, but there was no fighting. On January 2, Bragg, confident the Federals would withdraw, was perplexed to find Rosecrans still in front of him. Late in the afternoon Bragg launched the brigades of Gen. John Breckinridge in an attack that drove back the Federal first line to a shallow river crossing known as McFadden's Ford, but they were stopped by massive artillery fire. The Confederates left 1,800 soldiers lying on the field and in the river.

Thus the battle ended. Both sides claimed victory. Losses on both sides were heavy, with an estimated 13,000 Union and 10,000 Confederate killed and wounded. The common soldier of both armies had fought bravely. However, the Confederate infantry, despite its courage, was no match for the excellence of the Union artillery. And on January 3, 1863, Bragg retreated 64 kilometers (40 miles) to Tullahoma, Tenn., and Rosecrans occupied and fortified the city of Murfreesboro. The loss of the food producing section of Middle Tennessee was a severe blow to the Confederate army.

From the huge supply base that was constructed within Fortress Rosecrans—named for the Union general and the largest enclosed earthen fortification built during the Civil War—the Union army was able to launch a successful attack on the Confederate rail center in Chattanooga and thus complete the wedge through the Confederacy along the transportation routes running southeastward through Tennessee. After the battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga came Kennesaw Mountain, the destruction of Atlanta, Sherman's march to the sea, and the end of the war. Stones River marked the beginning of the end for the proud Army of Tennessee.

SAFETY AND YOUR VISIT

To make the most of a visit to the park, plan to stay a minimum of two hours. Your first stop should be the visitor center. An audio-visual program and a museum will help orient you to the various stages of the battle. A recorded guide for use along the self-guided auto tour is available upon request.

Groups desiring special programs should make arrangements with the superintendent at least two weeks in advance. Picnicking is permitted but limited to a designated area. Camping facilities are available outside the park. Pets are welcome but must remain on a leash.

As in any situation, conditions exist that can spoil your time in the park. Watch for exposed roots, uneven trails, poison ivy and sumac, ticks, slippery rocks, occasional snakes, and rocky outcroppings that can cause a fall, injury, or unpleasantness. The river is unsafe for wading or swimming. Have a safe and enjoyable visit.

A Note About Accessibility

The visitor center information facilities are accessible to visitors who use wheelchairs or have sight or hearing impairments. A captioned version of the audio-visual orientation program and an audio tape tour of the battlefield are available upon request. Restrooms are accessible. Information about paved trails is available at the information desk. Sixty percent of the historic features can be viewed from a motor vehicle.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

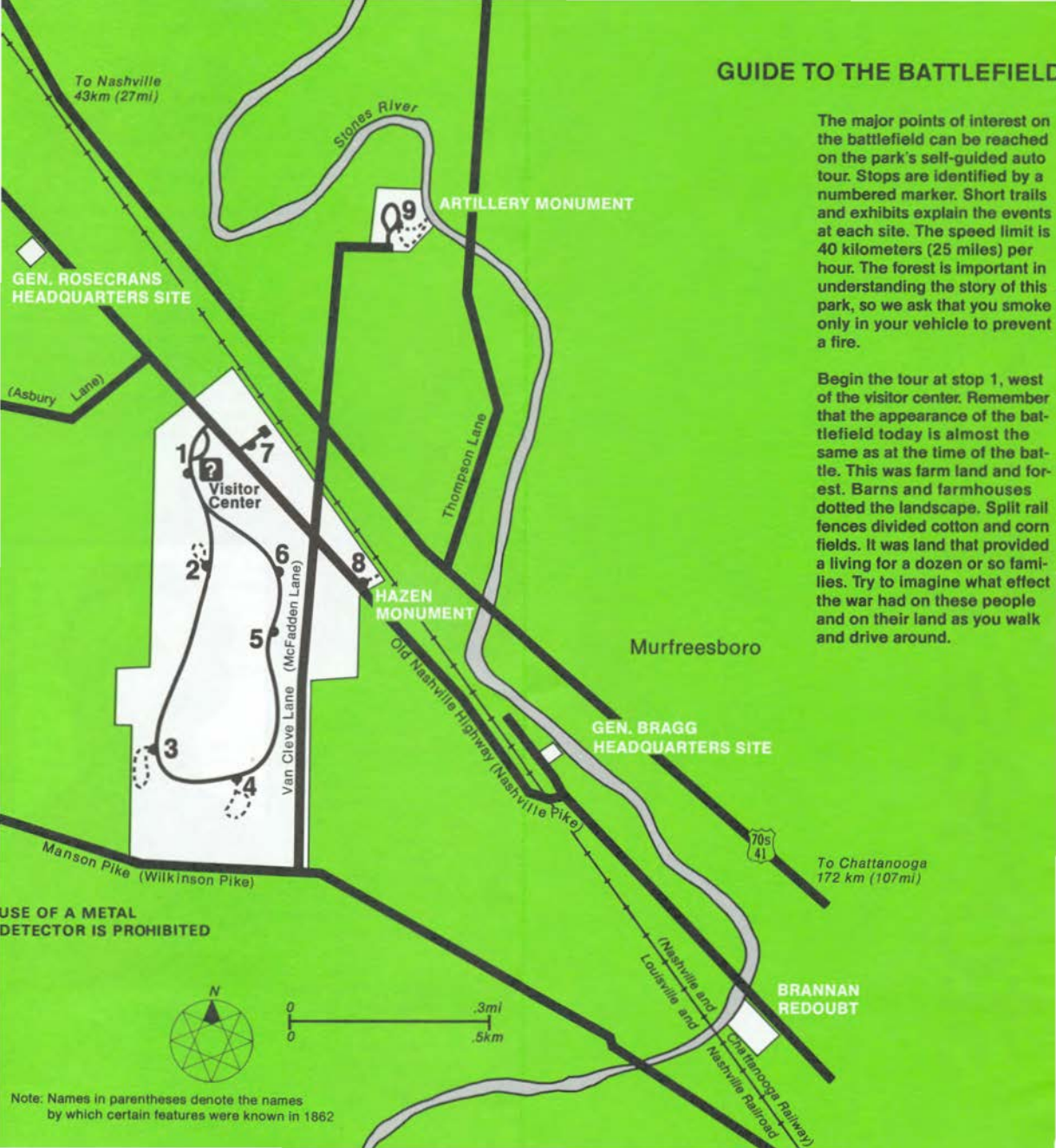
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



GUIDE TO THE BATTLEFIELD

The major points of interest on the battlefield can be reached on the park's self-guided auto tour. Stops are identified by a numbered marker. Short trails and exhibits explain the events at each site. The speed limit is 40 kilometers (25 miles) per hour. The forest is important in understanding the story of this park, so we ask that you smoke only in your vehicle to prevent a fire.

Begin the tour at stop 1, west of the visitor center. Remember that the appearance of the battlefield today is almost the same as at the time of the battle. This was farm land and forest. Barns and farmhouses dotted the landscape. Split rail fences divided cotton and corn fields. It was land that provided a living for a dozen or so families. Try to imagine what effect the war had on these people and on their land as you walk and drive around.



To Nashville
43km (27mi)

Stones River

ARTILLERY MONUMENT

GEN. ROSECRANS
HEADQUARTERS SITE

1
2
7
Visitor Center

1

2

7

2

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(Asbury Lane)

Thompson Lane

Van Cleave Lane (McFadden Lane)

HAZEN MONUMENT

Murfreesboro

GEN. BRAGG
HEADQUARTERS SITE

Manson Pike (Wilkinson Pike)

70s
41

To Chattanooga
172 km (107mi)

USE OF A METAL
DETECTOR IS PROHIBITED



0 .3mi .5km
0

BRANNAN
REDOUBT

(Nashville and
Louisville and
Chattanooga Railway)

Note: Names in parentheses denote the names
by which certain features were known in 1862

TOUR STOPS

December 31, 1862

1 Chicago Board of Trade Battery (10 a.m.)

Thousands of Union troops burst from the cedars located across the field behind the visitor center and were followed closely by victory-confident Confederates. The Chicago Board of Trade Battery, so called because the Board of Trade provided the money for establishing and equipping the 6-gun battery, sprang into action on this rise. Their charges of canister forced the Confederates to withdraw to the cedars. A second battery joined in on the left, and the combined fire broke up the attack.

2 The Fight for the Cedars (10 a.m.)

The deep Confederate penetration at this point forced Rosecrans to revise his plan to assault the Confederate right. He rushed reserves to this sector, and Union artillery along the Nashville Pike finally checked the drive.

3 Water's Alabama Battery (12:30 p.m.)

This Confederate artillery unit tried to bring its guns into action as it followed in the rear of Anderson's Brigade. The dense cedar forest and limestone outcroppings prevented Waters from bringing his four deadly artillery pieces into position to support the Confederate infantry, which was attacking the Union positions

along the Nashville Pike. Without sufficient artillery support, the Confederate infantry assaults were doomed to failure.

4 Sheridan's Stand (10 a.m.)

Near here, the men of Gen. Philip H. Sheridan and Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas warded off determined Confederate assaults. In an attempt to crack the Union line at this point the Confederates wheeled up their guns to within 183 meters (200 yards) of Sheridan's position, but attack after attack still failed with costly losses to both sides. Eventually, however, Sheridan abandoned his position. His delaying action during the withdrawal had given Union troops time to form a new line along the Nashville Pike.

5 Confederate Advance (8 a.m.-11 a.m.)

Union troops of Gen. Thomas L. Crittenden's command held this part of the line against Confederate attacks during the early morning. At 10 a.m. Confederate forces from Tennessee under Gen. Daniel S. Donelson advanced and forced them back into the woods here. Crittenden's men became intermingled with retreating forces from the units of Sheridan and Thomas, making an orderly withdrawal impossible. The Union troops rallied along the Nashville Pike while Confederates advanced through the cedars.

6 Rosecrans Establishes A New Line (5 p.m.)

When the attacking Confederates saw the new Union battle-line drawn along the Nashville Pike and into the Round Forest, they fell back into the cedars. As long as the Federals clung to the Round Forest, the Confederates could not gain victory.

To reach stop 7, you must cross the Old Nashville Highway. The high-speed driving encountered here is not like that on the park roads. Be cautious crossing this heavily traveled road.

7 Stones River National Cemetery (12 noon-4 p.m.)

This hillside was an open field. With the railroad at their backs, Union artillery were randomly placed from the Chicago Board of Trade Battery on your right, across this hillside to the Round Forest on your left, in an effort to support the infantry that was stretched along the Nashville Pike. After the battle, most of the dead were buried on the field. When the National Cemetery was established in June 1865, the Government disinterred the Union dead and reburied them here. Of the more than 6,100 Union burials, 2,562 were not identified. Confederate soldiers were not buried in this Cemetery, but were taken to their home towns, the nearest southern community, or buried in unmarked mass graves on the battlefield. The Cemetery is landscaped according to an 1892 plan.

8 Struggle for the Round Forest (9 a.m.-4 p.m.)

This was the only Union position to hold throughout the first day of the battle. The first Confederate attack came at 10 a.m. across the field on the other side of the Nashville Pike and was broken up by Union artillery. An hour later another charge carried to within 137 meters (150 yards) of the Union line before being stopped. The monument erected in 1863 by the survivors of Col. William B. Hazen's brigade is the Nation's oldest Civil War memorial.

January 2, 1863

9 Breckinridge's Attack (4 p.m.-6 p.m.)

As Union soldiers crouched here behind breastworks of stone and rail, a battered advance division fled back across the river pursued by Gen. John C. Breckinridge's hard-driving Confederate brigades. Union batteries firing from the rise above McFadden's Ford halted Breckinridge's pursuit with shot, shell, and canister. Some 1,800 Confederates were killed or wounded in less than an hour in this final action of the battle.

Other Points of Interest

You may wish to visit the headquarters sites of Generals Bragg and Rosecrans as well as Brannan Redoubt, a part of Fortress Rosecrans. See the map for directions.