

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

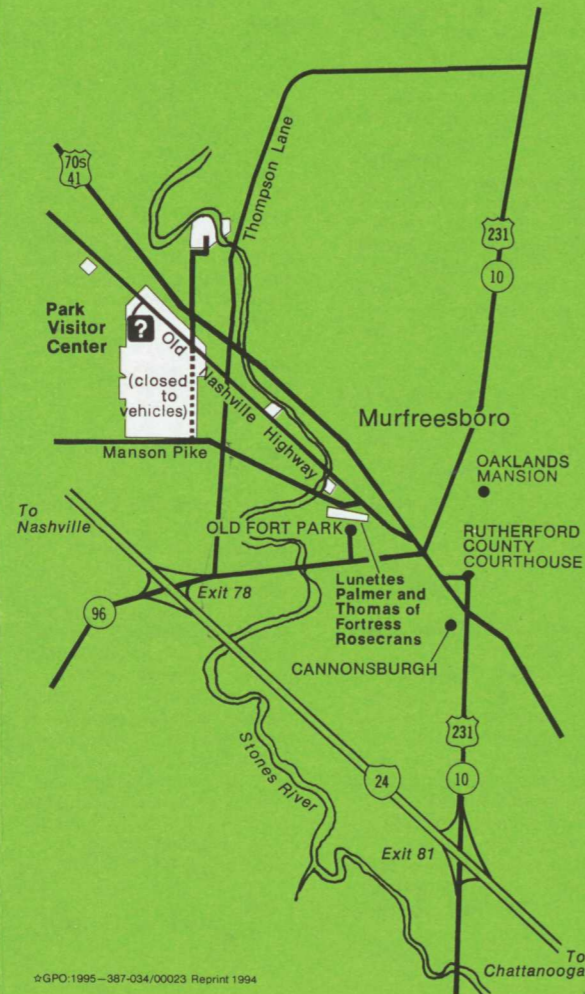
The visitor center information facilities are accessible to visitors who use wheelchairs or have sight or hearing impairments. A captioned version of the audio-visual orientation program and an audio tape tour of the battlefield are available upon request. Restrooms are accessible. Information about 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

STONES RIVER NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD AND CEMETERY

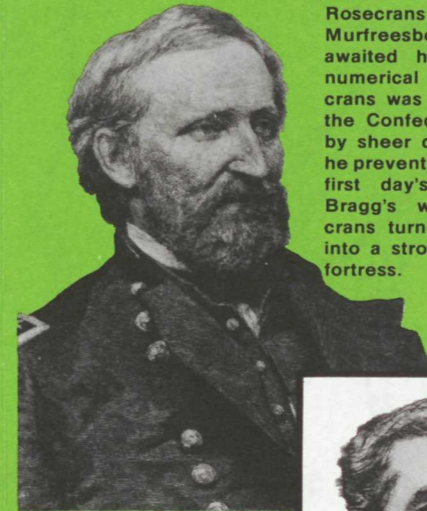
The park is in the northwest corner of Murfreesboro, Tenn., 43 kilometers (27 miles) southeast of Nashville, and is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, and the superintendent's address is 3501 Old Nashville Highway, Murfreesboro, TN 37129-3095. The park telephone number is 615-893-9501 (TDD).



stones river

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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.

