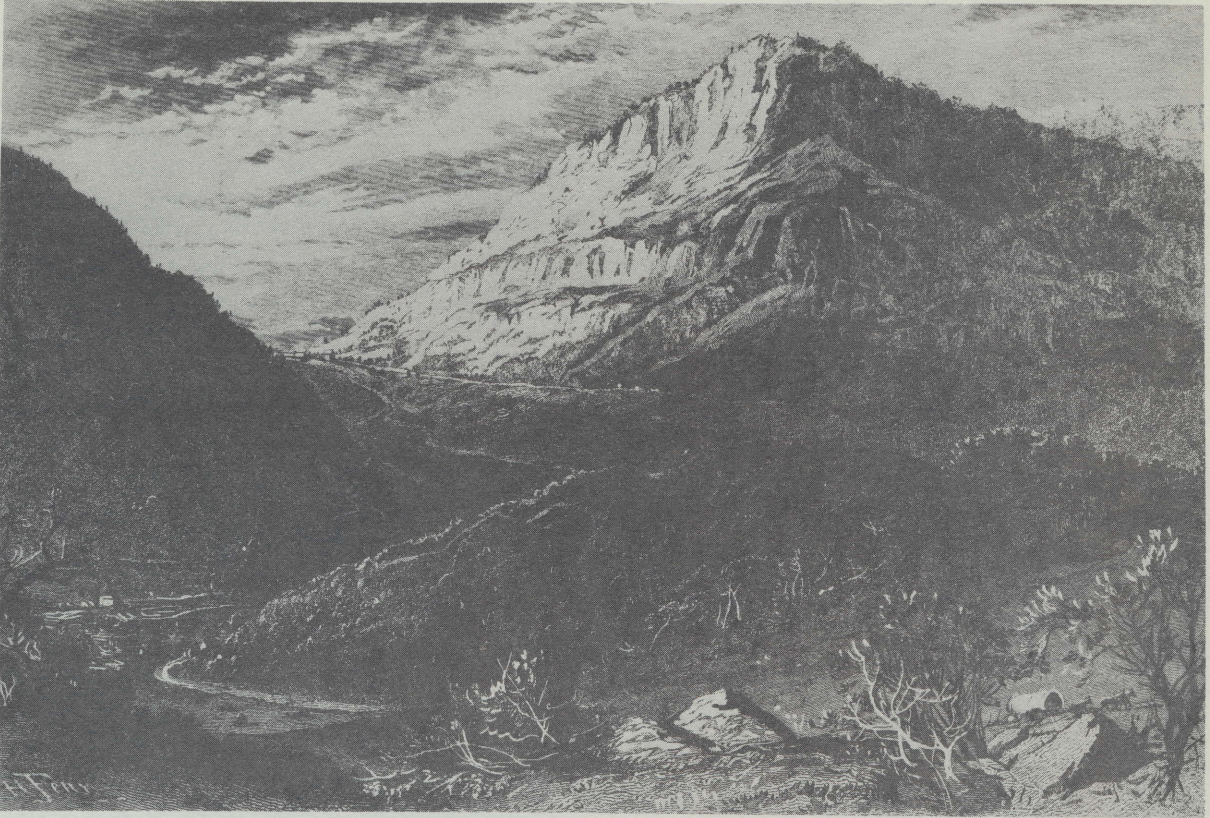


THE PINNACLE

Pinnacle Road Closed to Vehicles Over 20 Ft. Long and Trailers



Cumberland Gap as seen from the Tennessee side drawn by Harry Fenn in 1872.

Standing at the Pinnacle overlooking Cumberland Gap one can only be impressed with its commanding view. Little wonder that legend has it the Cherokee Indians held war council at this spot. If we could stand here for 1,000 years as the Pinnacle has, the view of an important chapter in America's past would have unfolded before us just as the famous historian noted:

"Stand at Cumberland Gap and watch the procession of civilization, marching single file - buffalo following the trail to the salt springs, the Indian, the fur-trader and hunter, the cattle-raiser, the pioneer farmer - and the frontier has passed by."

Frederick Jackson Turner, 1883

To fully appreciate this statement one can view a bronze sculpture at the Pinnacle Shelter near the parking area.

THE PIONEER ERA AND CUMBERLAND GAP

Driving to the Pinnacle, visitors are quickly impressed by the steepness of the mountains as their cars struggle to the top. At the observation deck, looking on the valley below it is easy to see why a gap, or low spot, through the long mountain ranges was so vital to westward expansion.

First to use this portal to the west were buffalo, elk and deer. Indians following the herds, developed several trails that funneled through the Gap. The most significant was the Warriors Path used by the Shawnee Indians of Ohio and Michigan and the Cherokee Indians of Tennessee and North Carolina.



Longhunters found the area of the Allegheny Mountains to be an excellent hunting ground. They often stayed for months before packing their pelts back to civilization. Dr. Thomas Walker, a land surveyor from Virginia, recorded traveling through the Gap in 1750. This pass soon became a popular route to the bluegrass region. Upon hearing stories of the region from his friend, John Finley, Daniel Boone left his North Carolina home to explore the area. Boone became familiar with the western lands; in 1775 he was commissioned by the Transylvania Associates, a land company, to gather 30 axemen and blaze a road from the long island of the Holston River (present Kingsport, Tn.) to an area near Lexington, Kentucky where Boone would later build Fort Boonesboro. This narrow winding foot road opened Kentucky to the westward migration of settlers. Pioneers who traveled this road did so in the middle of winter on foot enduring the cold weather and rugged mountain terrain. The 208 mile journey would take six to eight months to travel. In 1777 Kentucky became Virginia's western most county. In 1796 the path was widened to allow passage of wagons. After the Revolution, the mainstream of western settlement poured through the Cumberland Gap and slowed only when more direct northerly routes were opened.

WAITING FOR THE BATTLE THAT NEVER CAME

The Civil War at Cumberland Gap

The old Wilderness Road cutting through the Gap was a natural invasion route. For the Confederacy, it led to the rich Kentucky bluegrass country to the north. For the Union, it led to the Northern sympathizers of East Tennessee, and to an opportunity to cut rebel supply lines.

In late summer of 1861, the Confederacy seized the Gap, and made it the eastern anchor of a defense line extending to the Mississippi River. Brig. Gen. William Churchwell was placed in command, and fortified the garrison during the fall of 1861. He built seven forts on the north facing slope, and cleared the mountains of all trees within one mile of each fort. Needed more elsewhere, the Confederates abandoned the Gap in June 1862.

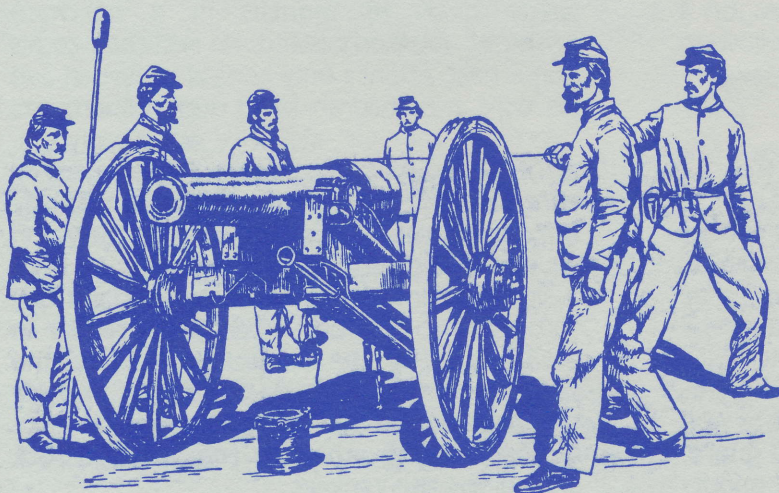
Union Brig. Gen. George W. Morgan soon arrived to take possession of the Gap. The 20,000 men under his command began build-

ing nine south-facing batteries to repel an invasion. But none came. The Confederates under Lt. Gen. Kirby Smith by-passed the Gap with 12,000 men, and moved into Kentucky, severing Morgan's supply line. Without food and still fearing attack, General Morgan boldly led his men north through enemy territory to safety.

The confederates returned to the Gap, cleared up the mess Morgan and his men left behind, and strengthened the forts. Many skirmishes took place, as Unionists from Tennessee raided the garrison. In September 1863 a Union force under Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside moved towards the Gap. On September 7, the Yankees destroyed provisions stored at the Iron Furnace. He also deceived the Confederate commander, Brig. Gen. John W. Frazer, into believing that his force was stronger than it actually was. Believing his Confederates to be outmanned and short of provisions necessary for a long siege, General Frazer surrendered his garrison on September 9.

Lining up along the Harlan Road, the Confederates were amazed to see the small force to which they had surrendered. The Gap remained in Union hands until the end of the war. Except for a garrison inspected by Lt. Gen. U. S. Grant in January 1864 when he labeled the Cumberland Gap the "Gibraltar of America", there was little excitement. Meanwhile, the war fought to its end in the South and East.

By the end of the war the Gap had changed hands four times, yet no major confrontations took place here.



Letters written during the civil war give us insight into the life of the soldiers. Following is a letter from a confederate soldier stationed at Cumberland Gap.

Cumberland Gap, Tenn. April 28th 1863

Dear Father and Mother....:

As I can get no letters from home to revive or divert the weary mind. I thought I would put in a few leisure moments in penning you a few lines. Notwithstanding I have nothing new to communicate...

I have not had an opportunity of going up on the Mountain to see our fortifications. Yet to sit in my tent and view those lofty summits of the "old Cumberland", to see the different red mounds thereon, Tents setting by Craggy rocks and bluffs in every direction all tell us that death and destruction would be dealt to an advancing foe. We have no war news, everything seems to be still...

I am moderatley well pleased with our situation. I would prefer being in a country where we could have access to the luxuries of country produce. But we cannot expect to live in clover all the time. Since writing the above we have drawn meal, bacon & rice. This is Robisons & Campbells day to cook. They have dinner and Supper almost ready (for we take both together). James Roane is gone with a dispatch to Hardin Ky. Gen. Marshall is sleeping over there somewhere...

Write soon. I hope to get some letters today. Your devoted Son.

Seth H. Hyatt

THE LEGEND OF LONG TOM

The legend of "Long Tom" has captured the interest of historians and individuals since the war. We know for fact that it was a gun nearly 18 feet long, and was reasonably accurate with a range of approximately five miles. (Some say the cannon was a 64-pound seacoast gun while others maintain it was a 32-pound smooth bore, rifled, to give it a 64-pound capacity. In any case the cannon was so huge that it could strike fear into any opposing enemy).

The confederates were the first to haul the huge gun atop Cumberland Mountain in 1861. However, there was no real action to test its effectiveness. Upon abandoning the Gap in 1862, they pushed "Long Tom" off the cliff.

Union General Morgan ordered the gun hauled up to give Johnnie Reb a taste of his own medicine. Once brought to the top the Yanks discovered they had no suitable ammunition for the gun. Before their evacuation in 1862 "Long Tom" was spiked and again pushed off the edge. By spiking the cannon a rattail file was driven into the vent and broken off, making the gun useless.

The whereabouts of "Long Tom" remains a mystery. Some say the cannon buried itself muzzle first into the earth and will never be found. Most likely it was found after the war and taken to Newlee's iron furnace in the town of Cumberland Gap, TN. There it was used as a hitching post for horses. It was later taken to Chattanooga and melted down. However, many old timers insist the cannon is still waiting to be found.

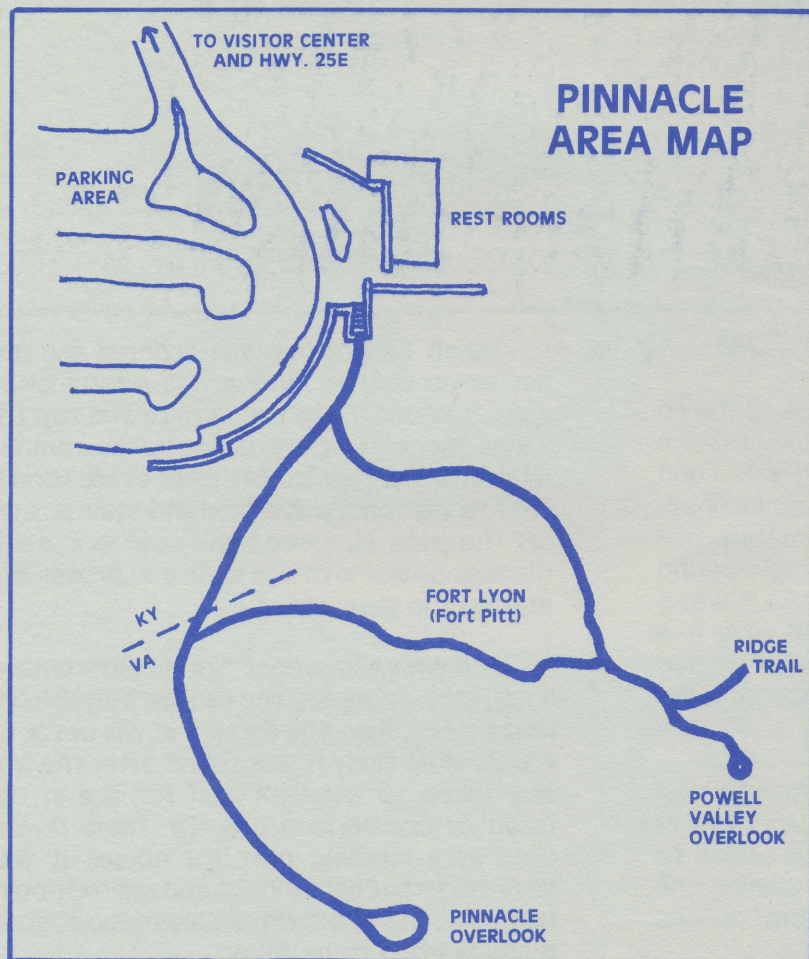
WHY IS CUMBERLAND GAP SO IMPORTANT?

The mountain barrier facing the pioneers was made of several different mountains mainly, the Cumberland, Little Black and Pine Mountains. Although several passes were available through Cumberland Mountain they did not permit travel through the other mountains. Cumberland Gap, on the other hand, is linked to the west by a low valley through the little Black Mountain and an opposing gap in Pine Mountain.

THE GAP

Geologists believe that the gap was formed by water erosion. It is believed that Yellow Creek flowed southeast over the once flat land to the Powell River. When the land began to rise, due to faulting and uplifting in the earth's crust, the creek cut through to continue its path. However the mountain rose faster than the

water could cut through the rock and only a small gap was created. The creek was then forced to change its course and drain into the Cumberland River to the west.



THE MIDDLESBORO BASIN

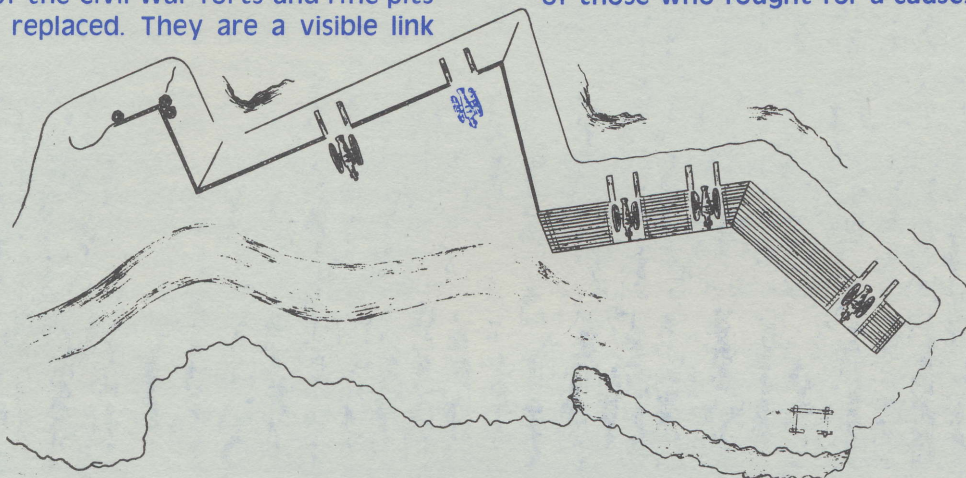
If you look to the right (west), you will see the town of Middlesboro situated in a low flat area through which Yellow Creek flows. Two main theories concerning this basin exist. One states it formed as a giant bubble which then collapsed into the flat circular valley we see today. Another speculates the basin was created by a huge meteor striking the earth. Whatever the cause, the Yellow Creek Basin is a flat area of broken rock covered by stream sediments.

CIVIL WAR FORTS

Fort Lyon (Pitt) is not easily identifiable. This and other forts of Cumberland Gap had earthen walls, not the log walls that many people envision when they think of the word, fort. Can you pinpoint where the walls are? Use the map for help.

The walls of the Civil War forts and rifle pits cannot be replaced. They are a visible link

to the past from which we can all learn. Hopefully, your descendants will learn from them also. Walking and climbing on the walls of these fragile artifacts will severely damage them. The National Park Service needs your help in staying off the walls and encouraging others also, to preserve the walls in memory of those who fought for a cause.



Fort Lyon (Pitt) as taken from an engineers drawing in 1862. The cannon currently in place is the second gun from the left. Also note the underground ammunition storage area and the road from the Gap that led into the fort.

As you approach Fort Lyon you can now realize how Cumberland Gap figured prominently in the Civil War strategy of both sides. On a rock near the Fort is carved the following inscription:

W. R. MCENTIRE
Liet. Co. A. 9 GA. Bat. Arty.
September 9, 1863

Lt. William Randolph McEntire was an officer in the Confederate forces from Georgia at Fort Lyon. When the rebel commander at Cumberland Gap ordered the surrender, the spirited Georgians refused and McEntire ordered his cannons to keep firing. For refusing to obey orders, the Georgia unit, as well as Lt. McEntire, was put under armed guard. Legend has it the group took several oppor-

tunities to rip down the American flag to demonstrate their discontent. McEntire spent over 18 months in a northern prison at Johnson's Island. He returned to his home near Atlanta only to find it burned and his wife and children killed during Sherman's "March to the Sea". McEntire was deeply embittered and moved to Dallas, Texas where he entered the banking business and eventually remarried. The Lieutenant died in 1917. On his death bed he asked his grandson to keep a simple promise: return to Cumberland Gap 100 years to the day after his surrender in 1863, stand at the Pinnacle and curse the Yankees for five minutes. Keeping his promise the grandson made his pilgrimage on September 9, 1963, stood at the inscribed rock and cursed the Yankees.