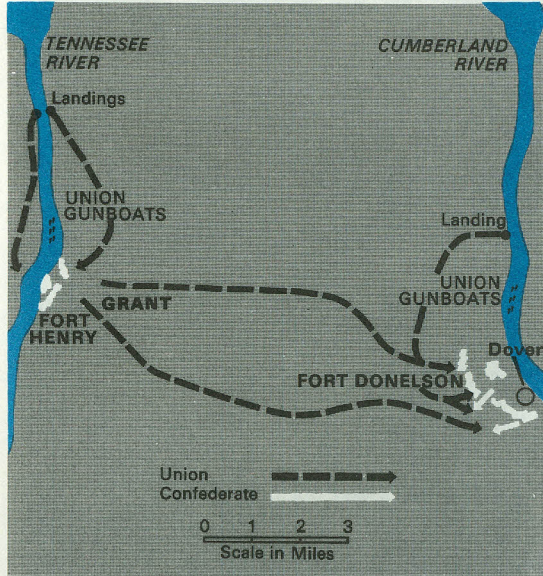


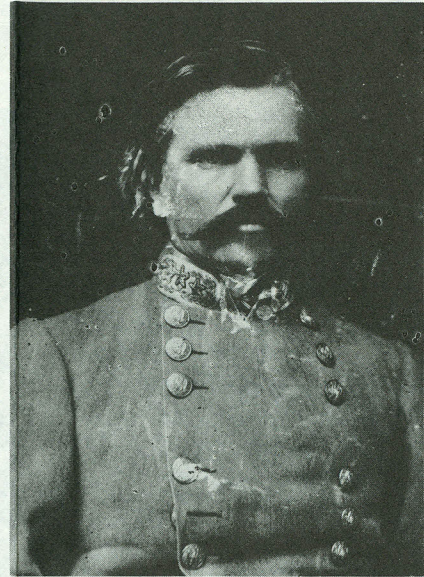
Fort Donelson

NATIONAL MILITARY PARK • TENNESSEE

Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant



Brig. Gen. Simon B. Buckner



No terms except an unconditional and immediate
surrender can be accepted. U. S. Grant

Bells rang jubilantly throughout the North at the news, but they were silent in Dixie. The cause? The fall of Fort Donelson in February 1862. It was the North's first major victory of the Civil War, and it opened the way into the very heart of the Confederacy.

In January, the Confederates had seemed invincible. A stalemate had existed since the Southern victories at Manassas and Wilson's Creek in the summer of 1861. Attempts to break the Confederate defense line, which in the west extended from the Mississippi River to the Appalachian Mountains, had achieved little success.

A reconnaissance in January convinced the Union command that the most vulnerable places in the Confederacy's western line were Forts Henry and Donelson, earthen works on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers. In early February, the Federals launched their attack on Fort Henry using the Tennessee River for transport and supply. An obscure brigadier general, Ulysses S. Grant, was in charge of the expedition. This was to be the first test of the Union ironclad gunboats, commanded by Flag Officer Andrew H. Foote. The plan called for the gunboats to engage Fort Henry until the army could surround it. The battle raged for more than an hour, but the little fort was no match for the gunboats. To the army's chagrin, the ironclads pounded the fort into submission before the sol-

diers arrived, and most of the Confederate garrison escaped before the surrender on February 6. The Tennessee was open to Muscle Shoals. Now for the Cumberland and Fort Donelson.

The weather turned unseasonably warm as the Union troops marched on Fort Donelson a few days later. Along the way, believing that the temperature was typical of the South in February, many of the soldiers cast aside their heavy overcoats—an act they would soon regret. By February 13, some 15,000 Union troops nearly encircled the outerworks of Fort Donelson.

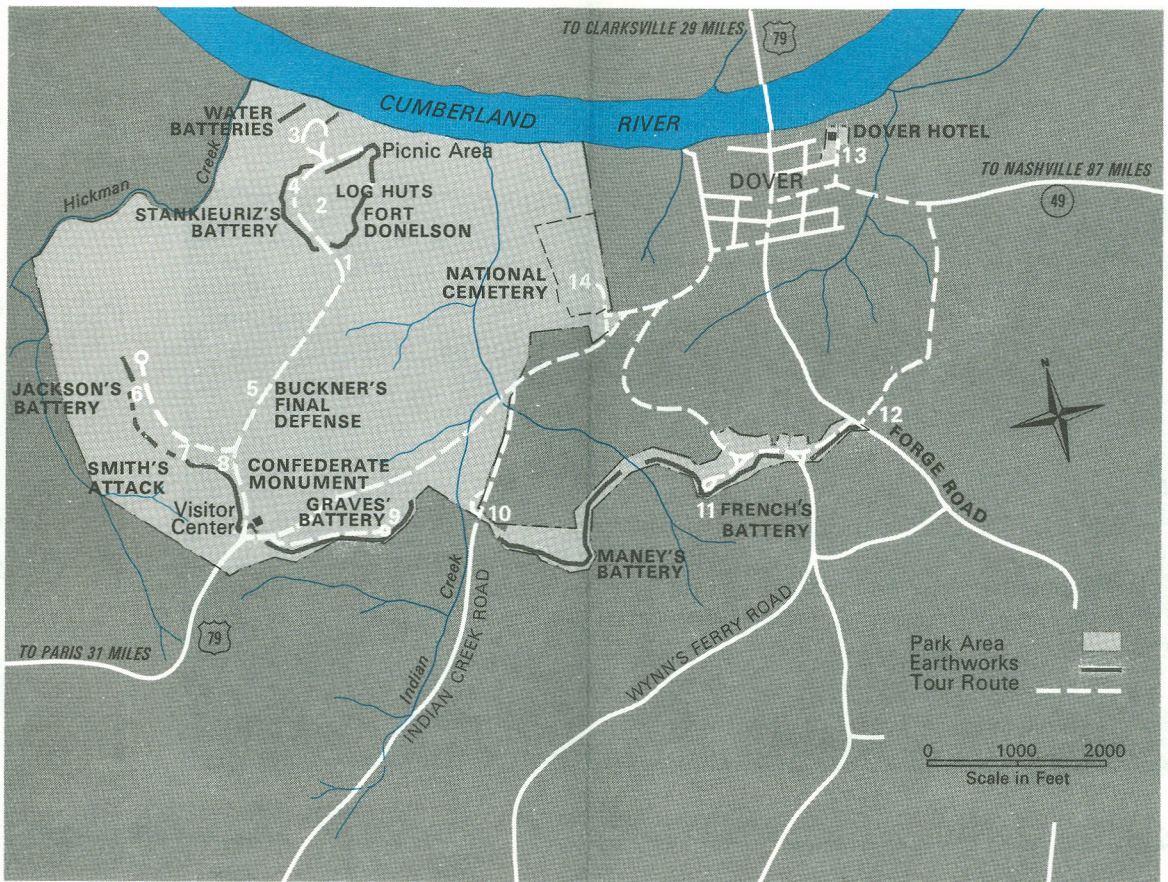
Sporadic clashes broke out that day without either side gaining ground. Nightfall brought bitter weather—lashing sleet and snow that caused great suffering. The morning of February 14 dawned cold and quiet. Early in the afternoon, the stillness was broken by a furious roar, and the earth began to shake. The Union gunboats were exchanging "iron valentines" with the 11 big guns in the Southern water batteries. During this 1½-hour duel the Confederate guns inflicted such extensive damage upon the gunboats that they were forced to retreat. The hills and hollows echoed with cheers from the Southern soldiers.

The Confederate generals—John Floyd, Gideon Pillow, Simon Buckner, and Bushrod Johnson—also rejoiced; but sober reflection revealed another danger. Grant was receiving reinforcements daily and had extended his right flank to Lick

Creek to complete the encirclement of the Southerners. If the Confederates did not move quickly, they would be starved into submission. Accordingly, they massed their troops against the Union right, hoping to clear a route to Nashville and safety. The battle on February 15 raged all morning, the Union army grudgingly retreating step by step. Just as it seemed the way was clear, the Southern troops were ordered to return to their entrenchments—a result of confusion and indecision among the Confederate commanders. Grant immediately launched a vigorous counterattack, retaking most of the lost ground and gaining new positions as well. The way of escape was closed once more.

Floyd and Pillow turned over command of Fort Donelson to Buckner and slipped away to Nashville with about 2,000 men. Seven hundred others followed cavalryman Col. Nathan Bedford Forrest across swollen Lick Creek. That morning, February 16, Buckner asked Grant for terms. Grant answered, "No terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted." Buckner surrendered.

The North had won its first great victory and gained a new hero—"Unconditional Surrender" Grant. The heartland of the Confederacy was open, and the Federals would press on until the "Union" became a fact once more.



TOURING THE PARK

1. Fort Donelson. Soldiers and slaves built this 15-acre fort over a period of 7 months, using axes and shovels to make a wall of logs and earth 10 feet high. The fort's purpose was to protect the Cumberland River batteries from land attack.

2. Log Huts. Some 200 huts stood within Fort Donelson at the time of the battle. Confederates constructed them for winter quarters. Sometime after the surrender, Federal forces burned the cabins because of a measles outbreak.

3. River Batteries. Here inexperienced Confederate gunners faced Federal ironclad gunboats and defeated them in a land-naval battle that was heard 35 miles away.

4. Stankieuriz's Battery. The odd-looking gun in the middle is an 8-inch siege howitzer. The Confederates used it to lob shells at the Union soldiers sheltered from ordinary artillery behind the hills.

5. Buckner's Final Defense. After the Confederate breakout attempt, Grant ordered Gen. C. F. Smith to attack the far right flank of the Southern lines. Smith's troops drove the Confederates back to this ridge, where they valiantly held their position until reinforcements arrived.

6. Jackson's Virginia Battery. Ordered to support the Confederate right wing, Jackson's four-gun battery moved up to this position on the night of the 13th. It was held in reserve here throughout the following day. Early on the morning of the 15th the battery was ordered to the Wynn's Ferry Road sector.

7. Smith's Attack. Union troops swarmed up these snow-covered slopes on February 15 in a determined assault against the Confederate rifle pits.

In fierce hand-to-hand combat, the Confederates were driven back to the ridge at stop 5.

8. Confederate Monument. Erected by the Tennessee Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1933, it commemorates the Southern soldiers who fought and died at Fort Donelson.

9. Graves' Battery. From this spot Confederate artillery hurled shells into the Union lines about 1 mile away.

10. Maney's Battery. Exposed Confederate gunners, picked off one by one on February 13 during the Union attack on this battery, resolutely stuck by their guns until the Federals were driven off by Confederate infantry.

11. French's Battery. In conjunction with Maney's Tennessee Battery to the west, the four-gun battery emplaced here was to prevent Union forces from attacking down Erin Hollow and penetrating the Fort Donelson perimeter.

12. Forge Road. The Confederate massed attack on February 15 opened this avenue of escape, only to have it closed again through blunders and indecision on the part of the Southern generals and by a Union counterattack.

13. Dover Hotel. Here Buckner surrendered about 13,000 Confederate troops. On the riverbank at the foot of this street, they were loaded onto steamboats for the long trip north to Federal prison camps.

14. National Cemetery. After the battle, many of the dead were buried on the battlefield. In 1867, 670 Union dead (512 of which were unknown) were reburied here. Soldiers of other wars and their dependents are also buried in this cemetery.

FOR YOUR SAFETY

Hikers, bikers, and automobile drivers, watch out for each other.

- **Hikers, walk facing traffic.**
- **Bikers, ride in direction of traffic in single file.**
- **Drivers, observe speed limits; park only in pull-offs.**

Keep close watch over your children.

- **Be cautious near the Cumberland River; it is swift and deep.**
- **Be alert for poison ivy, poisonous snakes, and ticks.**

Fort Donelson is 1 mile west of Dover and 3 miles east of Land Between the Lakes on U.S. 79. The visitor center is open daily except December 25. Special services for groups can be arranged upon request.

ADMINISTRATION

Fort Donelson National Military Park and Cemetery are administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Box F, Dover, TN 37058, is in immediate charge.

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

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