

At first there was cheering on both sides, but soon all that ceased . . . With high-wrought, supreme earnestness, and with a savage, fiendish purpose, all strained themselves to the very utmost to wound and kill. This close, murderous contest continued for a solid half hour.

—A Federal Soldier

Among the casualties of the fighting in the woods was Brigadier General Elisha Franklin Paxton, C.S.A. Paxton had endeared himself to Stonewall Jackson by his hard fighting and his fervent participation in the same Lexington Presbyterian Church which Jackson attended. On the night of May 2, Paxton had been struck with a distinct impression that he would be killed in the morning, and he went about arranging affairs accordingly with his staff. The next dawn he was up and reading his Bible in the gray light when orders came for an attack. Within a short time he was shot down while leading his men and died within a few moments, reaching for a pocket containing family pictures.

Another Confederate Brigadier General in the same division suffered a totally different fate. He was J. R. Jones from the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. During the winter of 1862-1863 General Jones had suffered the unique notoriety of being formally charged with cowardice in connection with his performance at Sharpsburg the preceding September. The whole affair was still pending when the battle of Chancellorsville opened. During the heavy fighting of May 3, Jones left the battlefield complaining of an "ulcerated leg." He never again was associated with the Army of Northern Virginia.

If you have the opportunity to walk in the surrounding woods and across the fields, you will traverse historic ground on which thousands of men were shot in 1863. Their sacrifices here have turned some ordinary Virginia hardwood forest into hallowed ground.

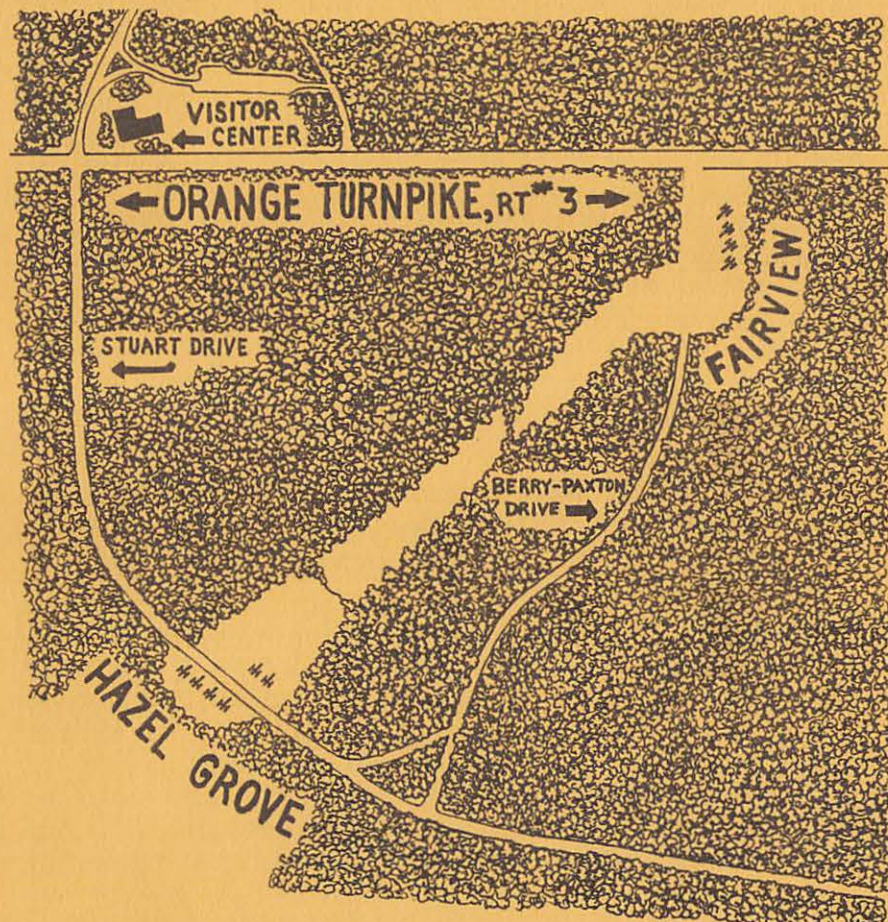


GENERAL PAXTON

HAZEL GROVE

At Hazel Grove . . . the finest artillerists of the Army of Northern Virginia were having their greatest day.

—A Confederate Historian



In May of 1863 the armed might of the United States and of the Confederate States focused on the woods and fields of a piece of Virginia back-country near the Chancellorsville crossroads. A gigantic struggle raged for three days. Some brilliant Confederate maneuvers—"the tactical masterpiece of the 19th Century"—had given



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them the initiative, but the final victor was determined by the simple question of who could hold and utilize the little hilltop clearing called Hazel Grove.

When you stand by the Confederate guns at Hazel Grove today you will be amidst the scene of a terrific artillery fight. The battle had started on May 1 several miles to the east, the direction in which the guns are pointing. On May 2 General T. J. Jackson had engineered the famous and highly successful flank march which swept around to your right and behind you by several miles and resulted in an attack which pushed the Northern forces back to this vicinity. On the morning of May 3 this spot was just inside Federal territory, but several perceptive Confederate officers had discovered that Hazel Grove was the key position. They prepared to take the clearing at any cost. When the attack came it met only an easily captured rearguard, for the Union army had inexplicably decided to abandon Hazel Grove.

Now the scene was set for the climactic hours of the battle. Confederate cannon were jammed into the open space——one of the very few places where artillery could be used in the tangled woods country.

“Guns had been brought to Hazel Grove from all the battalions on the field . . . Perhaps 50 guns in all were employed here.”

—A Confederate Artillerist

The large painting at Hazel Grove will help you understand what happened here. It depicts the Confederate artillery in action, in the process of driving enemy guns from the far clearing, which was called Fairview. The Union guns at Fairview were also being fired on by Confederate cannon along the road about a mile to your left and by other guns all the way on the other side of Fairview. They were almost literally surrounded. In the painting, E. P. Alexander is the officer directing the new gun into position; bespectacled Willie Pegram stands in the right foreground; Ham Chamberlayne kneels by mortally wounded Greenlee Davidson. Each of these officers were prominent artillerymen who contributed to the unparalleled success of the southern guns on this day.

“I remember Major Willie Pegram, with the fire of battle shining through his spectacles saying to Colonel Alexander, ‘A glorious day, Colonel, a glorious day.’”

—A Confederate Captain

The guns emplaced here today are a small sampling of those which fought here in 1863. They are 12-pounder howitzers and Na-



poleons, smoothbore pieces ideally suited for their task of firing at the Federal positions 1200 yards away through the opening in the woods. You can see the Federal cannon through the corridor in the woods. You are urged to walk through the corridor to Fairview, following the route which the Confederate artillery took in pursuing the retreating Federals. The two small streams separating Hazel Grove from Fairview are crossed by log bridges.

THE WOODS FIGHTING

While the two sides engaged in an artillery duel across the better part of a mile, the infantry was waging a much more personal battle in the matted underbrush which covered most of the battlefield. Divisions, brigades, regiments and even companies became separated and fragmented in the swampy, bullet-torn undergrowth. The woods fighting was so very confused that an eyewitness who played a major role was forced to admit: *“It would be useless to follow in detail the desperate fighting which now ensued and was kept up for some hours.”* Some of the ground was won and lost over and over again. The horror was intensified when the woods caught fire and some of the wounded burned to death.