SPOTSYLVANIA HISTORY TRAIL

A Walking Tour

When President Abraham Lincoln appointed Ulysses S. Grant General-in-Chief of all Union armies in March 1864, he did so with the hope that the hard-fighting Westerner would bring the Civil War to a close. Here, at Spotsylvania Court House, Grant took an important if costly step toward accomplishing that goal.

The combat that occurred around the strategic crossroads hamlet of Spotsylvania Court House lasted almost two weeks. Grant's original objective to seize the village and thus control the shortest route to Richmond was turned back on May 8, 1864 at Laurel Hill. For the next 13 days, Robert E. Lee's Confederate forces constructed earthworks and staved off several Union attempts to crush them.

The Federals initiated the most famous action at Spotsylvania on May 12th. For 20 hours, the soldiers struggled hand-to-hand through mud and gore across a narrow bend in the Confederate works which they called the Bloody Angle. Grant almost succeeded in breaking the vulnerable Southern position, but Lee held on long enough to complete a final line of trenches which his battered, but intact army occupied on May 13th.

The troops continued to skirmish from behind their lengthening entrenchments until May 18th. On that day, Grant once again hurled his men at Lee's defenders, but this time the bluecoats met an emphatic repulse. Three days later, the armies abandoned Spotsylvania and moved southeast, locked in a deadly embrace that would endure nearly 11 more months.

Just as at the Wilderness, Grant sustained tremendous casualties at Spotsylvania while failing to win a decisive victory. Lee also suffered at an appalling rate, but his were losses he could not easily replace. Simple arithmetic applied by Grant's relentless pressure caused the ultimate demise of the Confederate nation, an outcome accelerated by the events at Spotsylvania.

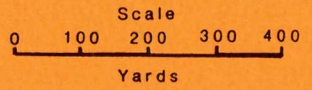# SPOTSYLVANIA BATTLEFIELD HISTORY TRAIL

Key

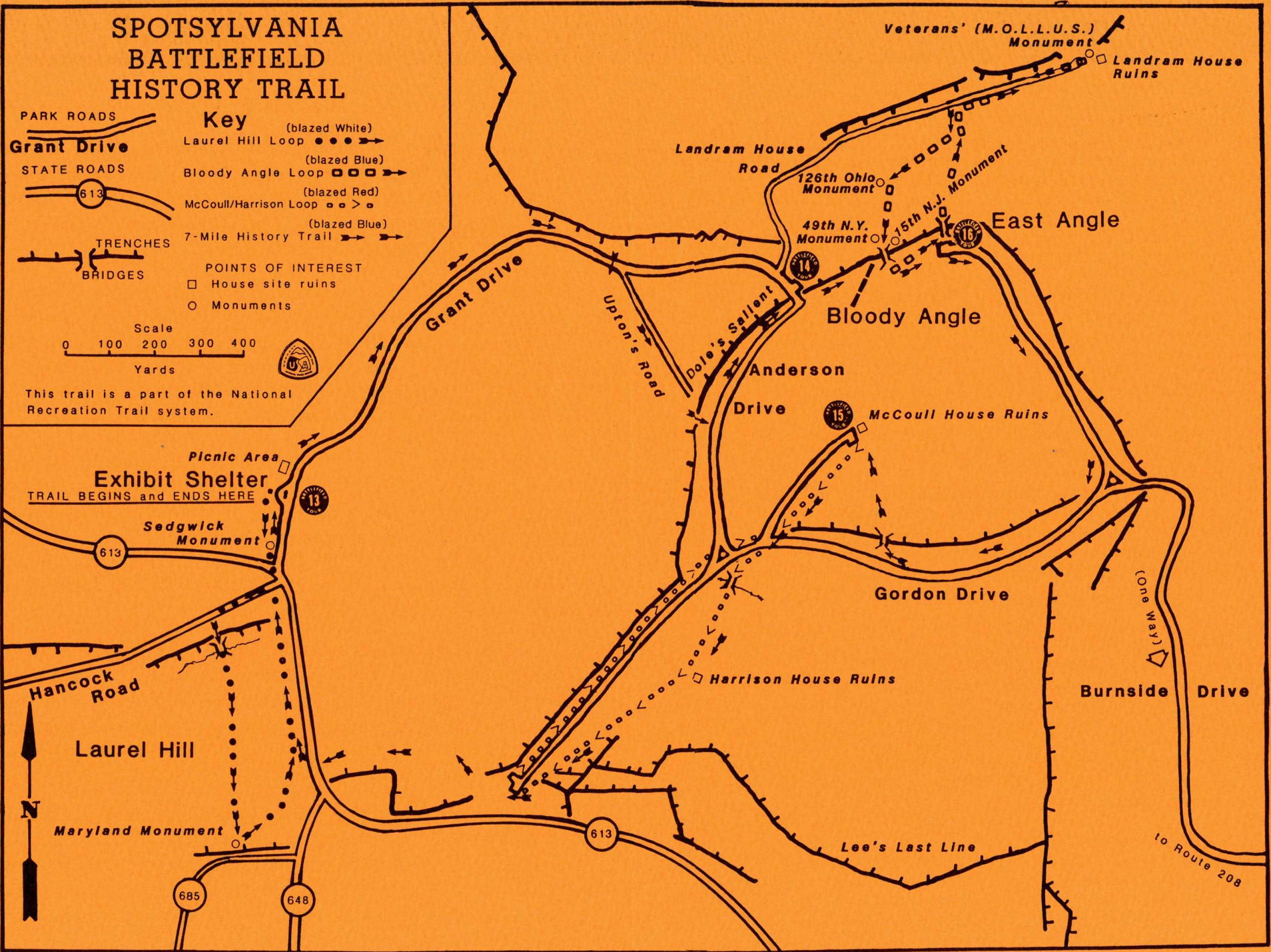**PARK ROADS**

Grant Drive

STATE ROADS

(613)

TRENCHES

BRIDGES

Laurel Hill Loop ●●● ➤ (blazed White)

Bloody Angle Loop □□□ ➤ (blazed Blue)

McCoull/Harrison Loop ○○ > ○ (blazed Red)

7-Mile History Trail ➤ ➤ ➤ (blazed Blue)

POINTS OF INTEREST
□ House site ruins
○ Monuments

Scale
0   100   200   300   400
Yards

This trail is a part of the National Recreation Trail system.

Veterans' (M.O.L.L.U.S.) Monument

Landram House Ruins

Landram House Road

126th Ohio Monument

49th N.Y. Monument

15th N.J. Monument

East Angle

Grant Drive

Upton's Road

Dole's Sallent

Anderson Drive

Bloody Angle

McCoull House Ruins

Picnic Area

Exhibit Shelter
TRAIL BEGINS and ENDS HERE

Sedgwick Monument

(613)

Hancock Road

Laurel Hill

Maryland Monument

Harrison House Ruins

Gordon Drive

(One Way)

Burnside Drive

Lee's Last Line

(613)

to Route 208

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HIKING THE TRAIL

The Spotsylvania Battlefield History Trail consists of a series of connected loops which can be sampled individually or tackled in various combinations. The entire trail measures seven miles but you may choose from several shorter circuit hikes.

The complete trail begins and ends at the Spotsylvania Exhibit Shelter, Stop 13 on the park's driving tour. Take a few moments to read the exhibits and view the large battle painting before you begin your walk. Interpretive signs, paintings and monuments along the trail will supplement the information provided at the Exhibit Shelter.

Check the map in this brochure for the trail routes. The complete trail is marked by blue blazes in the woods and mowed paths through the fields. It incorporates all three smaller loops and can be easily hiked in four hours.

The Laurel Hill loop is part of the May 8th battlefield and is blazed in white. This hike begins at the Exhibit Shelter and is about 1½ miles long.

The Bloody Angle loop begins at the parking area marked Stop 14. A brochure available up the hill from the parking area describes this 30-minute walk.

The McCoull-Harrison loop begins at the McCoull House parking area, Stop 15. Follow the mowed path and red blazes to shadow the Federal attack on May 18th and see some of the impressive earthworks that composed Lee's last line. This 1½ mile hike returns to the McCoull House via Anderson Drive.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND SAFETY

- Drinking water and restrooms are provided in season at the Exhibit Shelter.
- Bicycles and motorized vehicles are prohibited on trails.
- Walking on earthworks destroys these fragile resources.
- Please use the pedestrian bridges when crossing earthworks.
- Picnicking is allowed at the established area near the Exhibit Shelter only.
- Watch for traffic while hiking along roadsides, and use the crosswalks. Route 613 is particularly busy and vehicles travel it at high speeds.
- Be aware of trail hazards and uneven surfaces. Wear sturdy shoes or boots on longer hikes.
- Do not drink water from streams or springs.
- Stay on the trail to minimize potential contact with poison ivy and poison oak.