

Cobb's mother, to your present location by looking to the inset. The white house shown in the backdrop of the diorama in the visitor center is this fine old mansion.

**SUNKEN ROAD AND MERCER STREET**—The modern streets running into town offer you a glimpse of the terrain as it existed in 1862. One of the few features to offer Union troops any cover was the Stratton House, a brick residence that still stands. It is discernible on the near left-hand corner of Mercer and Littlepage Streets. Running along the far side of Littlepage Street is a swale, or depression, in which those Federals not shot down sought refuge from the leaden storm. Can you find it?

**SUNKEN ROAD AND KIRKLAND STREET**—Paving of the Sunken Road has obliterated some of its distinctive "sunken" character, but as you walk along the portion flanked by the original stone wall you can notice how the road was worn deeply into the ground. Imagine the protection the wall along the recessed road provided to Confederate soldiers in 1862!

To reach the battlefield many Northern troops crossed a canal ditch (modern Kenmore Avenue roughly follows its route) at Hanover Street. From the mouth of Kirkland Street you can look toward the town and see a stoplight. It marks the spot where a damaged bridge spanned the ditch during the battle. As soon as Federals crossed the bridge and ascended the bluff above the canal, they were hopelessly exposed to the terrific fusillade issuing from the Confederate lines.

Darkness finally ended the slaughter. Of about 30,000 Union soldiers engaged on this end of the line, more than 7,500 had fallen. Confederate losses were only a few hundred of the 11,000 men Lee threw in on this end of the field. Although Burnside had spent weeks opposite Fredericksburg, he had not adequately reconnoitered the Southern position and was startled by its strength. Distressed by the day's outcome, Burnside considered leading an attack the next day himself, but calmer heads prevailed. Burnside had unsuccessfully protested President Lincoln's order placing him in command of the army, saying he lacked the necessary talent. Lincoln now had grim proof that Burnside's misgivings were well founded.

When formal burial grounds were established after the war, the southern end of Marye's Heights was set aside as a National Cemetery. Today, Union soldiers rest peacefully on a hillside they could not take by force. To complete the irony, the citizens of Fredericksburg decided to bury Confederate dead in an annex to the city cemetery, which is located where Federal soldiers awaited the call to battle in 1862.

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The successful defense of Marye's Heights showed previously skeptical armies the value of entrenchments. From this time forward, Civil War soldiers would feverishly dig earthworks at every opportunity in order to gain the advantages of a prepared position, so graphically illustrated by the battle of Fredericksburg.



## FREDERICKSBURG & SPOTSYLVANIA NATIONAL MILITARY PARK



### SUNKEN ROAD WALKING TOUR GUIDE

The December 1862 battle of Fredericksburg was the most easily won victory of the Civil War for General R.E. Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. It was correspondingly among the most disheartening defeats suffered by the Union Army of the Potomac, led here by General Ambrose Burnside. The latter faced a number of difficult obstacles; among them was the nearly ideal seven-mile defensive position occupied by Lee's army on the ridges overlooking the Rappahannock River. This folder is a guide to a walking tour along a 300-yard stretch of the Southern line. Various signs and paintings identified on the map inside highlight the battle.

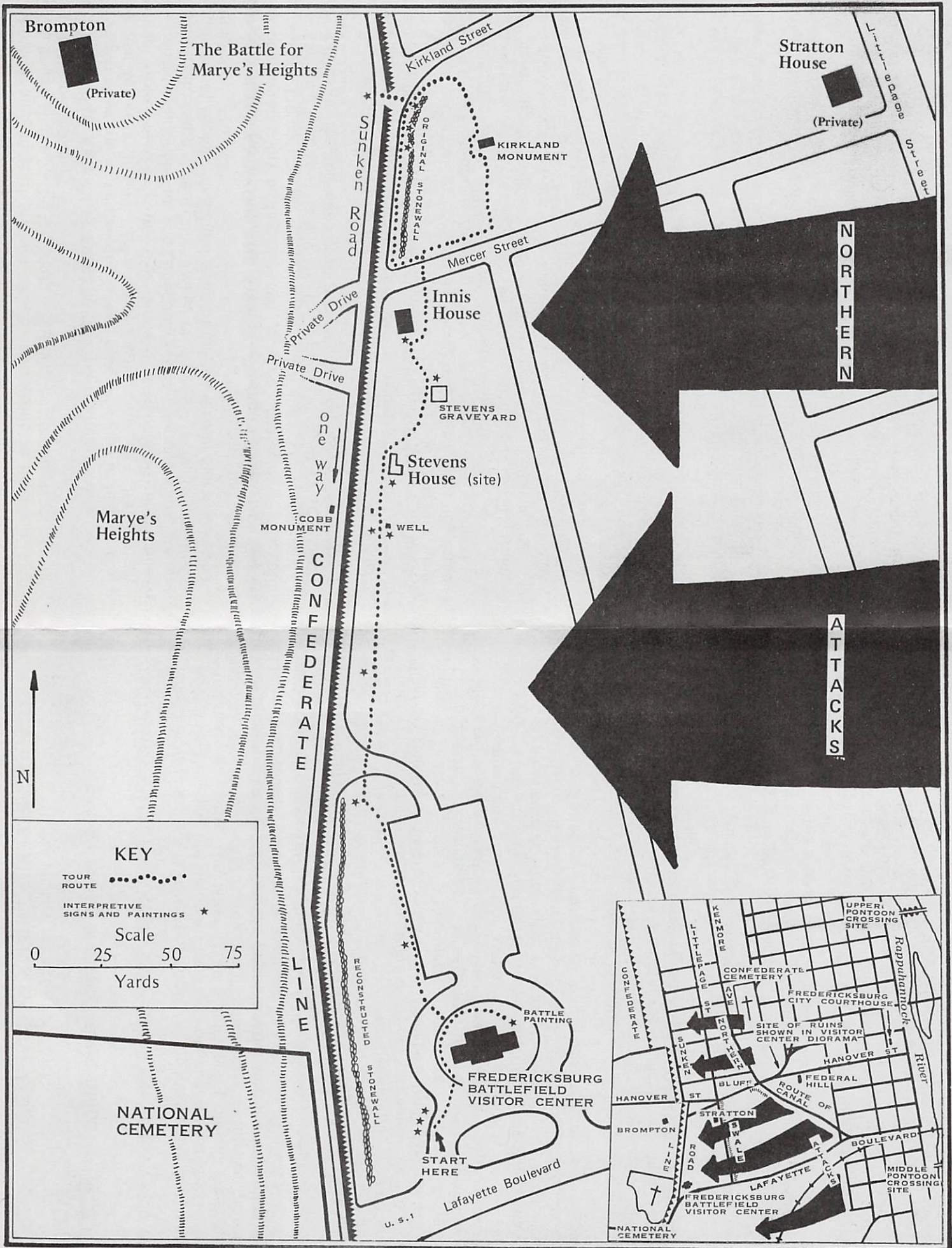
**BATTLE PAINTING**—The Union offensive plan called for two separate assaults. To the south, General William Franklin was to attack "Stonewall" Jackson; that action is described on the driving tour. (There is no connection between the general's nickname and the stone wall notorious in this battle.) When Franklin broke Jackson's line, General Edwin Sumner's Northern troops were to assail James Longstreet's Confederate stronghold on Marye's (pronounced "Marie's") Heights. But when Franklin became bogged down, Burnside grew impatient and precipitately ordered Sumner forward.

Beginning at noon, Sumner launched a series of divisional attacks. Most of them struck within the area outlined by the Sunken Road, Hanover Street, modern Kenmore Avenue and Lafayette Boulevard. Thousands of Federals advanced in long blue waves across the open plain in textbook fashion as had been done in Europe for centuries: Pageantry abruptly gave way to disaster as cannon crowning the heights raked the Unionists, knocking scores out of the ranks. Still, on they came. Infantry behind the stone wall fired crashing volleys, decimating entire Federal regiments. Northern General Darius Couch, observing the carnage from the cupola of the city courthouse (see inset), gasped: "Oh, great God! See how our men, our poor fellows, are falling!" A Pennsylvania colonel who survived the slaughter later wrote that:

The division was blown back, as if by the breath of hell's door suddenly opened, shattered, disordered, pell-mell, down the declivity, amid the shouts and yells of the enemy, which made the horrid din demoniac.

As one unit was routed, another sprang to the fore. Subordinate officers argued with Burnside the futility of these headlong attacks, but the general would not relent.

**COBB MONUMENT**—Although it is not visible from here today, you can appreciate the relationship of Federal Hill, the birthplace of General



**KEY**

TOUR ROUTE .....  
 INTERPRETIVE SIGNS AND PAINTINGS \*

Scale  
 0 25 50 75  
 Yards

