



*Federal Troops Check the Confederate Advance*

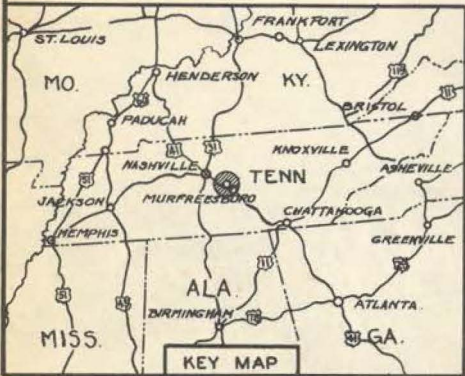
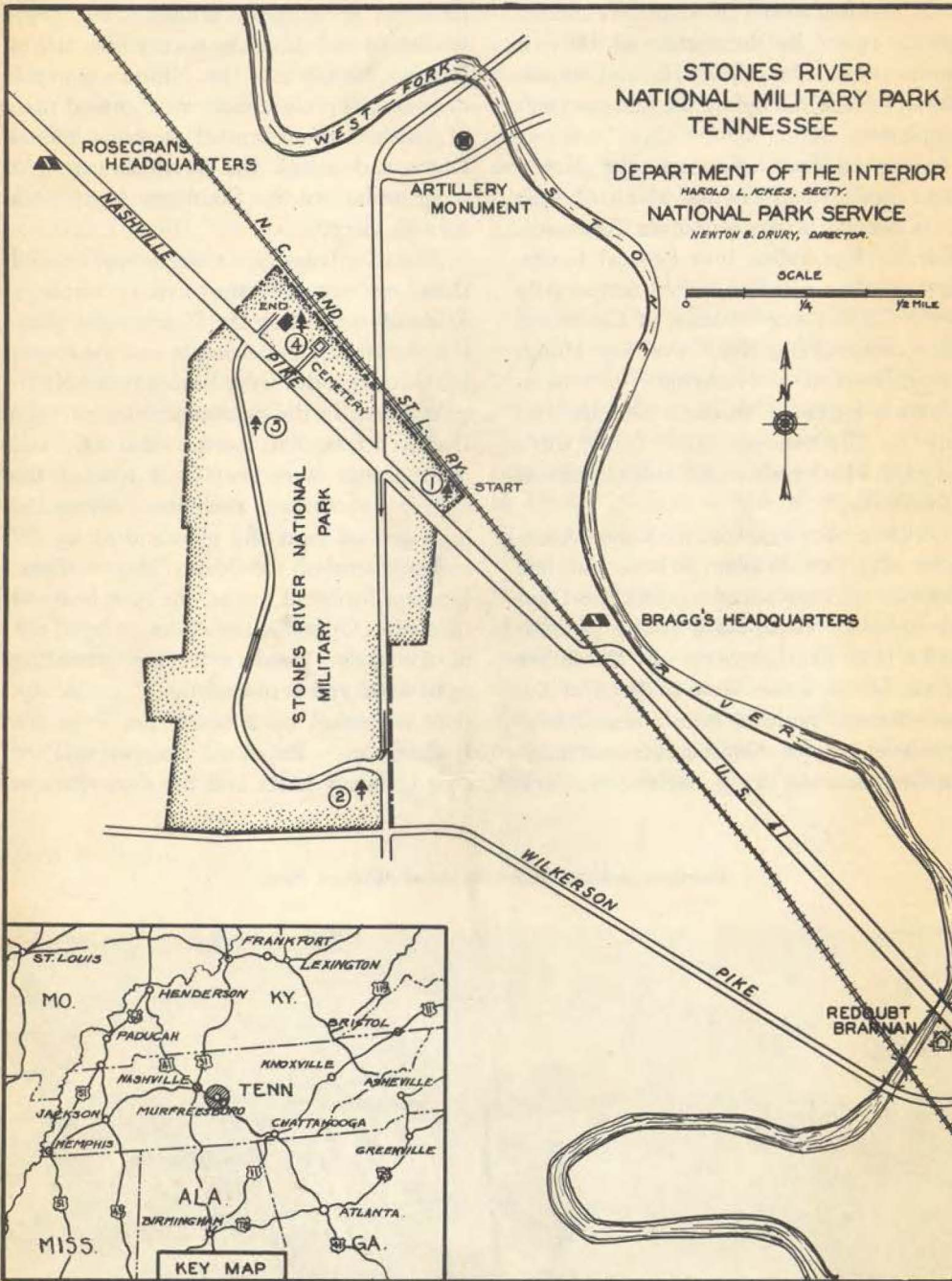
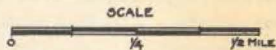
# Stones River

## NATIONAL MILITARY PARK

*TENNESSEE*

# STONES RIVER NATIONAL MILITARY PARK TENNESSEE

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HAROLD L. ACKES, SECTY.  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
NEWTON B. DRURY, DIRECTOR.





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NATIONAL MILITARY PARK • TENNESSEE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, HAROLD L. ICKES, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, NEWTON B. DRURY, *Director*

THE Stones River National Military Park commemorates the Battle of Stones River, sometimes called the Battle of Murfreesboro, fought December 31, 1862, to January 2, 1863. Considered to be one of the most sanguinary battles of the War between the States, this conflict marked the real beginning of the great Federal offensive which, cutting down through Chattanooga, Atlanta, and Savannah, finally trisected the Confederacy. The historian Ropes said of it: "Few battles have been fought which have better exhibited the soldierly virtues than the Battle of Murfreesboro or Stones River. The Confederate assaults were conducted

with the utmost gallantry and with untiring energy. They were met with great coolness and resolution . . ." Thus in the bitter sectional war in which this battle was a part, Americans of North and South opposed one another and freely gave their lives in order that by their sacrifice the principles on which our Nation is founded might be forever clearly defined.

## The Battle of Stones River

Strategy of the Union Army in its conduct of the war west of the Allegheny Mountains centered upon two major objectives: Getting complete control of the Mississippi River and driving a wedge through the Confederacy along the rail-

roads southeastward through Tennessee and Georgia. By the middle of 1862, it remained only for Vicksburg and its adjoining forts to fall before the first plan was completed.

In its advance eastward, the Union forces had gained control of all of west Tennessee and a part of middle Tennessee. Nashville had fallen into Federal hands. Further advances were halted temporarily by the Confederate invasion of Kentucky. After checkmating this move, the Union troops returned to Nashville. The Confederates retreated through Cumberland Gap to Chattanooga and from there moved to Murfreesboro, 30 miles southeast of Nashville.

On December 26, 1862, the Union Army under Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans left Nashville and advanced against the Confederates who occupied a strong position 3 miles from Murfreesboro. By December 30, the Union forces were in front of the Confederates' position near Stones River. That evening the Confederate commander, Gen. Braxton Bragg, decided to attack

the right wing of the Union Army, overwhelm it, and drive the enemy into Stones River. Meanwhile, the Union commander was adopting almost an identical plan of battle. He intended to cross Stones River and attack the Confederate right wing and force the Southern Army back into the river.

The Confederates moved earlier and therefore secured the first advantage. Furiously assaulting the Union right wing, they succeeded in driving it and the center back through the cedar brakes to the Nashville Pike. In the meantime, however, the Union attack had been called off, and these troops were sent back toward the highway to form a new line. Along the high ground near the pike and along the embankment of the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad tracks, the new line was formed. As the Confederates charged out of the cedar woods after the retreating right wing and center of the Union Army, they were met by a heavy fire from the fresh troops. Repeated charges resulted only in heavy losses and the Confederates

returned to the protection of the woods. The Confederate attack had been checked.

Throughout the next day the opposing armies faced each other without fighting. The Union forces succeeded in extending their left wing to high ground across Stones River where they commanded the Confederate right. On January 2, Confederate troops, massed on the right, moved forward to recapture the lost ground and drive the Union troops across the river. Their attack was successful, but the Confederate soldiers continued their charge down to the river. Here they came under a murderous fire of Union artillery, located on the heights across the river. In less than an hour 1,800 Confederates fell, killed or wounded. Union forces then advanced and recovered their original position.

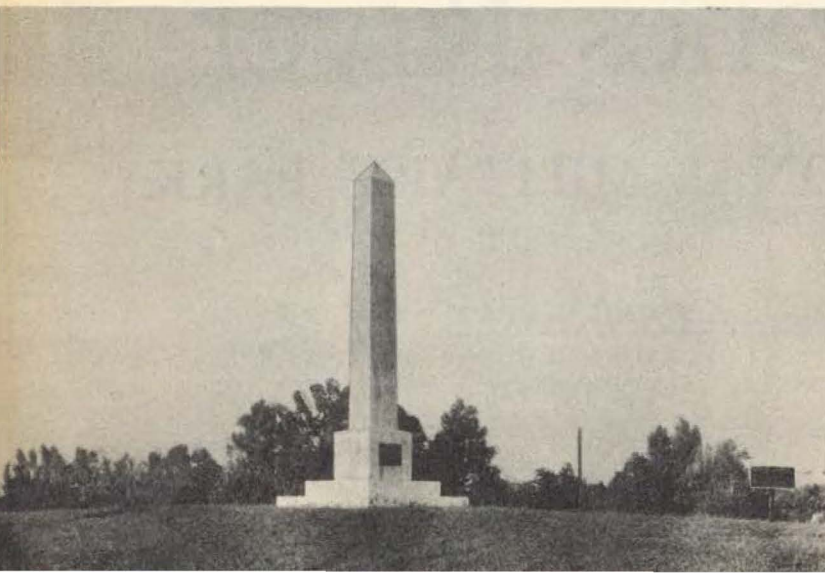
The next day General Bragg decided to retreat and issued orders for the retirement of his army to Tullahoma, about 40 miles southeast of Murfreesboro. Of his 38,000 troops, he had lost about 12,000 in killed, wounded, and missing. On the Union

side, the casualties approximated 13,000 out of 45,000 engaged. The Union Army then occupied Murfreesboro. Both sides had some claim to victory. The Confederates had captured 28 Union guns and over 3,000 prisoners. But the Union troops had gained possession of Murfreesboro and had forced their opponents to retreat.

## The Park

Stones River National Military Park includes a portion of the battlefield, a part of Fortress Rosecrans, built in 1863 to guard the town of Murfreesboro, and Stones River National Cemetery. The cemetery, containing almost 6,000 graves of Union soldiers, is one of the Nation's oldest national burial grounds. Perhaps inspiration for the establishment of national cemeteries was drawn from the Hazen Brigade Monument, located just south of the cemetery and believed to be the oldest memorial of the War between the States in the country. Here, in the early part of 1863, Union soldiers of Hazen's Brigade buried their dead comrades

*Monument to Mendenhall's Artillery*



*Entrance to Stones River National Military Park*



*Stones River National Cemetery*



and erected a monument to them. Its inscription, now faded with age, recounts the deeds of the brigade both at Shiloh and Stones River in these words: "The blood of one-third its soldiers twice spilled in Tennessee crimson the battle flag of the brigade and inspires to greater deeds."

## Redoubt Brannan

After the Union Army occupied Murfreesboro, an extensive fortification was constructed to guard the town against possible Confederate attack. It was named Fortress Rosecrans in honor of the Union commander. A part of the fortification, known as Redoubt Brannan, is included in the park. It is located at the point where the Nashville Pike, now U. S. Highway 41, crosses Stones River and is easily accessible to visitors.

## How to Reach the Park

Located 3 miles northwest of Murfreesboro, Tenn., the battlefield lies on both sides of U. S. Highway 41. Visitors are advised to go first to the office of the superintendent, located in the national cemetery, and begin their tour of the battlefield from there. Information tablets and trailside exhibits serve to tell the story of the battle.

## Self-Guided Tour

Visitors may follow a tour of the battlefield, stopping at the four trailside exhibits

from which a complete account of the battle may be obtained. Each exhibit contains an orientation map of the park showing the easiest approach to the next exhibit.

EXHIBIT No. 1.—Hazen Brigade lot. Here the visitor can obtain a view of the ground on which the battle lines were drawn prior to the engagement. The exhibit tells of the plans of both armies.

EXHIBIT No. 2.—Junction of Van Cleve Lane and Park Road. Located on ground originally occupied by Union forces, the site of the Confederate assault is visible. This exhibit shows the initial success of the Confederates in driving back the Union right wing and center.

EXHIBIT No. 3.—Flagpole near the Nashville Pike (U. S. 41). The Confederate advance was halted when Union troops were formed in a new line along the highway. The exhibit shows the repulse of the Confederate advance.

EXHIBIT No. 4.—Cemetery. The artillery monument is visible from this point. (Visitors may prefer to drive down Van Cleve Lane to the monument.) The exhibit shows the final action of the battle and the retreat of the Confederates.

## Administration

Stones River National Military Park is administered by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. All communications should be addressed to the Superintendent, Stones River National Military Park, Murfreesboro, Tenn.