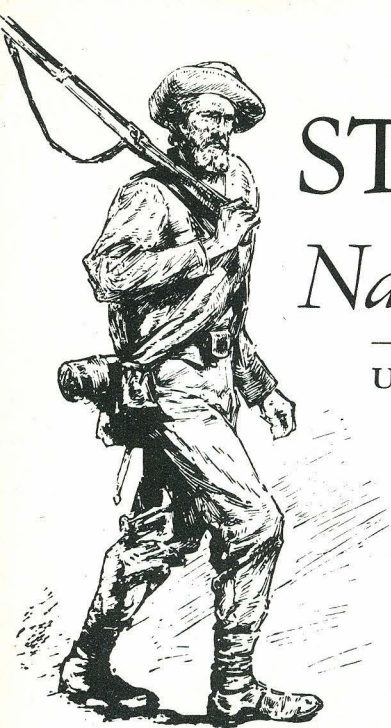


# STONES RIVER

*National Military Park • Tennessee*



# STONES RIVER

## *National Military Park*

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT  
OF THE INTERIOR

Oscar L. Chapman, *Secretary*  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Newton B. Drury, *Director*



*The first big battle in the Northern strategy of cutting  
the Confederacy in two by driving eastward to the sea.*

STONES RIVER was the scene of one of the hardest fought battles of the Civil War. Here, only a short distance from the town of Murfreesboro, Tenn., the Union Army of the Cumberland and the Confederate Army of the Tennessee fought a 3-day battle, December 31, 1862, through January 2, 1863. This was the first big battle in the 2-year campaign in the west that cut the Confederacy in two and reached its climax in Sherman's march to the sea.

Rosecrans' immediate aim was victory against Bragg's Army of the Tennessee, which was centered about Murfreesboro, 30 miles away, and then the capture of Chattanooga, an important railroad center 100 miles further to the southeast. With this city in Union hands, the army could then drive on eastward toward the coast. When it was reached, the South would be divided by a line that ran from the Mississippi to the Atlantic Ocean. Sherman reached Savannah, Ga., just 2 years after Rosecrans marched out of Nashville to begin the drive eastward. Many desperate battles lay between these two events.

### Rosecrans Advances from Nashville

THE Union Army in its conduct of the war west of the Allegheny Mountains centered its strategy upon two major objectives: Getting control of the Mississippi River, and driving a wedge through the Confederacy along the railroads 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 the advance eastward, Union forces had gained control of all west Tennessee, as well as Nashville and a part of middle Tennessee. Further advances were halted temporarily by the Confederate invasion of Kentucky, which was turned back finally when Buell defeated the Confederate Army under Gen. Braxton Bragg at the battle of Perryville on October 8, 1862. The Confederate plan of bringing Kentucky into the Confederacy was now abandoned. Bragg moved his army south through Cumberland Gap to Chattanooga and from there northwest to Murfreesboro, 30 miles from 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 Confederate positions near Stones River. The Union advance did not take place, however, without opposition from the Confederates. Gen. Joseph Wheeler, moving swiftly, conducted an important cavalry raid around the Union Army, burning and destroying wagon trains and generally harassing their rearguard. Starting on the night of December 29, he completely circled the Union Army and returned to the Confederate lines by morning of December 31, destroying nearly a million dollars worth of Federal property, and taking 700 prisoners.

### The First Day of Battle— December 31, 1862

ON the evening of December 30, the Confederate commander, General Bragg, formulated his plan of attack—an assault the next morning at dawn against the right wing of the Union Army in an attempt to drive it into Stones River. The Union commander, General Rosecrans, meanwhile, was adopting an almost identical plan of battle. He intended to cross

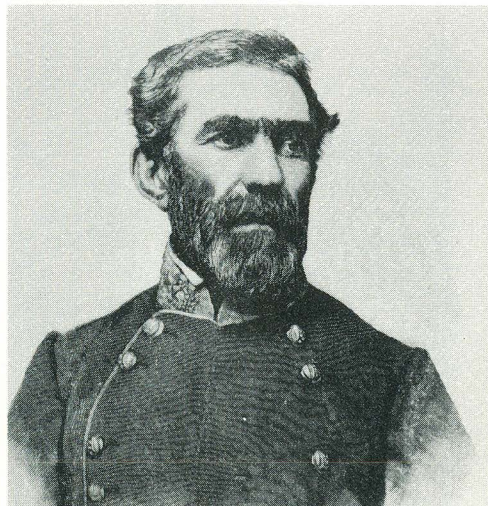


MAJ. GEN. WILLIAM S. ROSECRANS.

Stones River and attack the Confederate right wing and force the Southern army back into Stones River. If both plans had succeeded, the two armies would have swung each other like a revolving door.

Moving earlier, the Confederates secured the first advantage. At daybreak on the 31st they furiously assaulted the Union right wing and succeeded in driving it and the center back through the surrounding cedar brakes to the Nashville Pike. The Union attack against the Confederate right wing was called off, and the troops involved were sent back to the highway to form a new line behind the crumbling Union right and center along the high ground near the pike and along the embankment of the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad tracks. As the Confederates charged out of the cedar woods after the retreating right wing of the Union Army, they were met by a heavy fire from these fresh troops. Repeated charges resulted only in heavy losses for the Confederates and they finally fell back to the protection of the cedar brakes.

The attack of Hardee's corps against the Union right had been brilliantly successful. Bragg's orders to Breckinridge to roll up the Union center after the Union right had been driven back were not carried out at a critical



GEN. BRAXTON BRAGG.



*The Hazen Brigade Monument, erected by members of the brigade early in 1863 and believed to be the oldest Civil War memorial.*

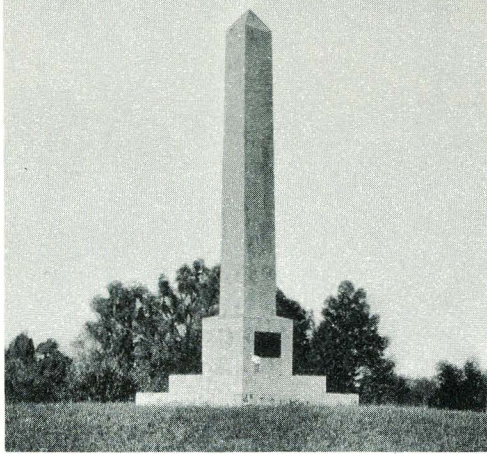
point in the battle just before noon. Had they been, it is very likely this added blow would have crumpled the Union troops holding desperately in the new line along the pike and the railroad. As it was, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois troops, their ammunition expended, used clubbed rifles and bayonets to repel the Confederate attack here. The fighting was especially close and desperate in the general vicinity where the Hazen Brigade Monument now stands and Van Cleve Lane meets the Nashville Road.

### Artillery Decisive on January 2

THROUGHOUT the next day the opposing armies faced each other without fighting. The Union commander moved his left wing to high ground across Stones River where it held a stronger position and was able to command the Confederate right. Bragg felt he must remove this threat to his position and assembled his best troops for an assault against it, timed to take place about an hour before dusk on January 2.

The attack succeeded, the Federal troops being driven from their positions in headlong retreat across Stones River.

At this juncture, Maj. Gen. Thomas L. Crittenden, commander of the Union left, observing the action and seeing that the Confederates were driving the Federal troops into and across the river, ordered his chief of artillery, Maj. John E. Mendenhall, to support the infantry with artillery. Mendenhall then assembled, in an incredibly short time, guns from 8 batteries, totaling 58 pieces, concentrating them on the heights about 100 yards from the river and overlooking the field of Confederate attack beyond. These guns were brought to bear at once upon the flower of the attacking Confederate troops, firing at the rate of about 100 rounds a minute. The result was ghastly. A successful dashing charge was turned into sudden retreat and rout. Eighteen hundred Confederates fell killed and wounded in a short time. Not a Confederate soldier reached the river. This decisive, sudden turning of the fortune of battle was due entirely to the work



Monument to Mendenhall's artillery.

Of the monuments and markers on the battlefield, the Hazen Brigade Monument is probably the most important. This monument, erected early in 1863 by the members of the Hazen Brigade, is believed to be the oldest memorial of the Civil War. It is located just south of the cemetery. A small plot of ground, detached from the principal part of the park, memorializes the site of Mendenhall's 58-gun concentration that decided the final outcome of the battle on January 2, 1863.

Stones River National Military Park is only one of several battlefields of the Civil War in Tennessee administered by the National Park Service. Not very far away, and easily reached from Murfreesboro and Nashville, are Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, Shiloh National Military Park, and Fort Donelson National Military Park.

of Mendenhall's concentrated artillery. This is perhaps the outstanding instance of ground combat in the Civil War when artillery was the decisive factor. As the Confederates fell back, the Union troops recovered their former positions.

On January 3, General Bragg decided to retreat because of the disaster of the preceding day, and issued orders for the withdrawal of his army to Tullahoma, about 40 miles southeast of Murfreesboro. The Union Army thereupon occupied Murfreesboro on January 4. The losses for both sides in the battle of Stones River were very high. Of the 38,000 Confederate troops engaged in the battle, 12,000 were casualties, and of the 45,000 Union troops engaged, approximately 13,000 were casualties.

Both sides had some claim to victory. The Confederates had captured 28 Union cannon and had taken over 3,000 prisoners. The Union Army, however, had held its position and occupied Murfreesboro, while the Confederate Army retreated.

### The Park

STONES RIVER National Military Park was established by act of Congress March 3, 1927. Its 324 acres include important parts of the battlefield and the national cemetery, which contains approximately 6,300 burials. Almost 6,000 of these are of Union soldiers, 2,560 of which are unidentified.

### How to Reach the Park

STONES RIVER National Military Park lies on both sides of U. S. No. 41, 3 miles northwest of Murfreesboro, Tenn., and 30 miles southeast of Nashville, Tenn. U. S. Nos. 70 and 31, intersecting U. S. No. 41 at Nashville, afford an easy approach to the battlefield. The park may be reached by Greyhound bus from Nashville and Murfreesboro.

### Service to the Public

INFORMATION and free literature concerning the park may be secured at the park headquarters building located in the national cemetery. These services are available to visitors every day from 8 a. m. to 5 p. m., and arrangements can be made for tours.

### Administration

STONES RIVER National Military Park is one of the many scenic, scientific, and historic areas of the National Park System owned by the people of the United States and administered for them by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. Communications should be addressed to the Superintendent, Stones River National Military Park, Murfreesboro, Tenn.

