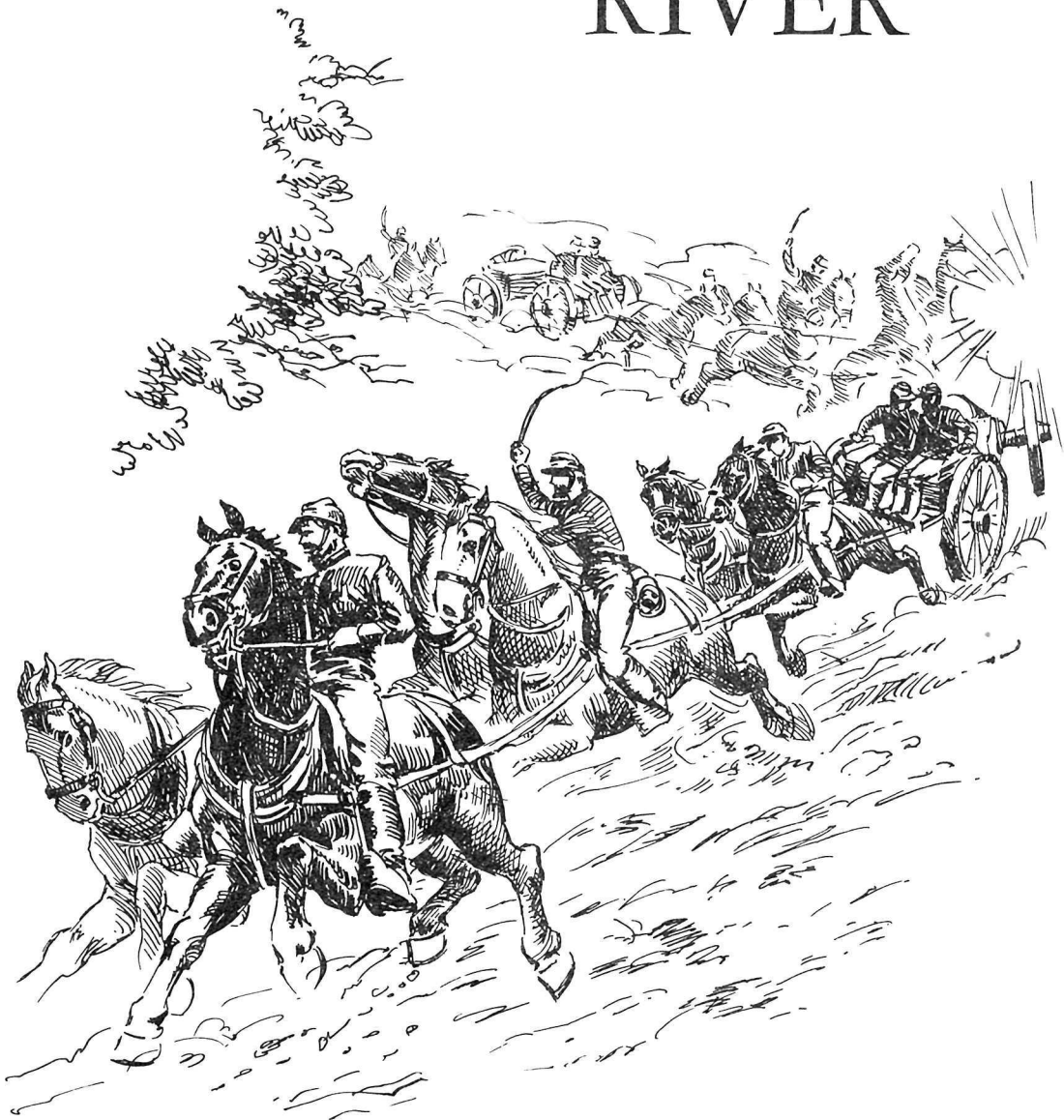


STONES RIVER



NATIONAL MILITARY PARK
TENNESSEE



STONES RIVER

National Military Park

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 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 Tennessee, which was centered about Murfreesboro, 30 miles away, and then the capture of Chattanooga, an important railroad center 100 miles farther 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 Stones River and attack the Confederate right wing and force the Southern army

MAJ. GEN. WILLIAM S. ROSECRANS.

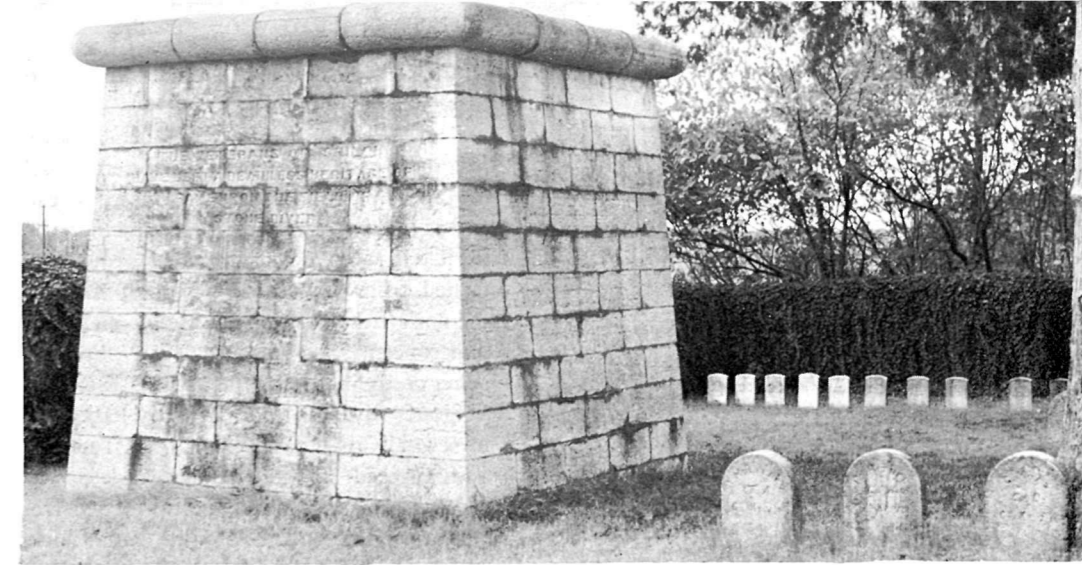


back into Stones River. This movement, had it been carried out, would have placed a part of the Union Army between the Confederate Army and Murfreesboro, which was the base of Confederate supply.

Moving first, the Confederates secured an early advantage. At daybreak on the 31st, they furiously assaulted the Union right wing and succeeded in driving it and part of the center back through the surrounding cedar woods to the Nashville Pike. Only inspired fighting by the right wing brigade of Brig. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan and stubborn holding of most of the center by Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas averted a rout of the Union Army at this stage of the battle. 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 along the high ground near the pike and along the embankment of the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad tracks. As the Confederates charged out of the woods, they were met by a heavy fire from these fresh troops. The Confederates finally fell back to the protection of these woods with heavy losses.

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 point in the battle just before noon. Had they been, it is very possible this added blow would have crumpled the Union troops

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.

holding desperately in the new line along the pike and the railroad. At 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

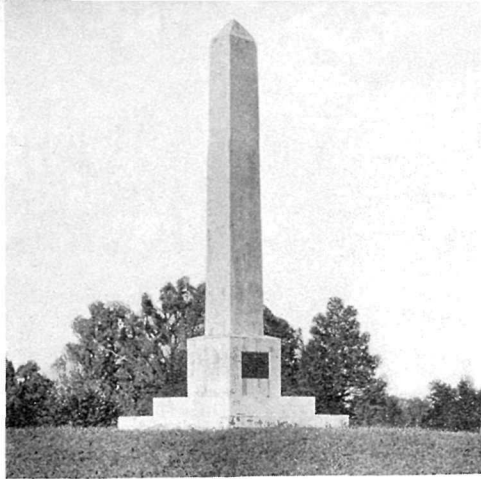
THROUGHOUT the next day the opposing armies faced each other without fighting. The Union commander moved his left wing to high ground across Stones River where it held a stronger position and was able to command the Confederate right. Bragg felt he must remove this threat to his position and assembled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

federates were driving the Union troops into and across the river, ordered his chief of artillery, Capt. 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 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

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.



Erected in 1906 by the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis RR., through its president, Maj. John W. Thomas, marking the Union artillery position which turned back the last Confederate charge. It overlooks the area where hundreds of brave men fell.

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 6,400 burials. Almost

6,000 of these are of Union soldiers, 2,562 of which are unidentified.

The Hazen Brigade Monument, located just south of the cemetery, was erected early in 1863 by members of the Hazen Brigade and is believed to be the oldest memorial of the Civil War. 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 one of several Civil War battlefields 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.

Location

The park is 3 miles northwest of Murfreesboro and 30 miles southeast of Nashville on U. S. 41. It may be reached by Greyhound bus from Nashville and Murfreesboro.

About Your Visit

You may obtain further information about this and other areas of the National Park System at the park headquarters building in the national cemetery every day from 8 a. m. to 5 p. m. Arrangements for tours may be made with the superintendent.

Administration

Stones River National Military Park is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Murfreesboro, Tenn., is in immediate charge.

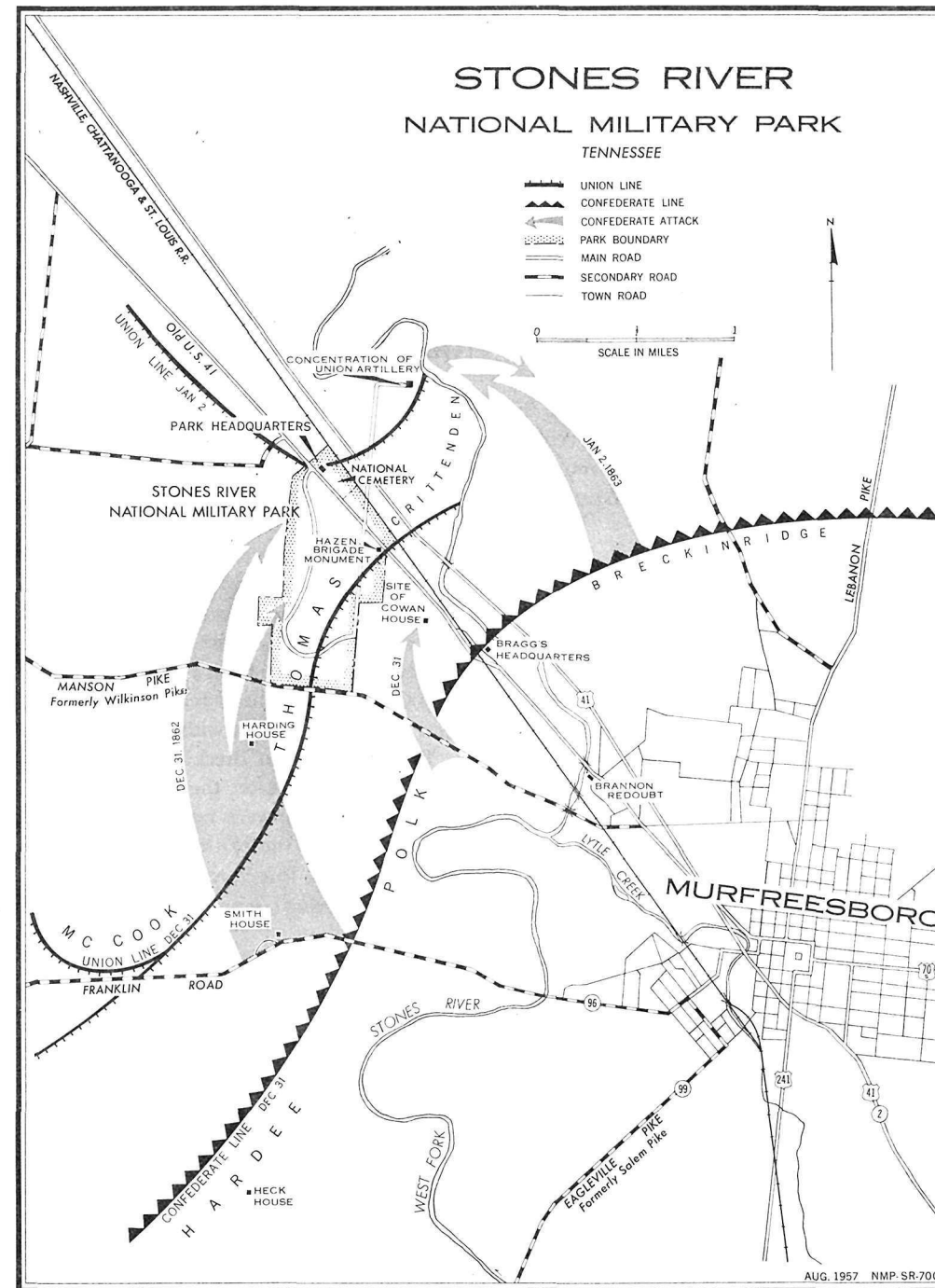


United States Department of the Interior

Fred A. Seaton, *Secretary*

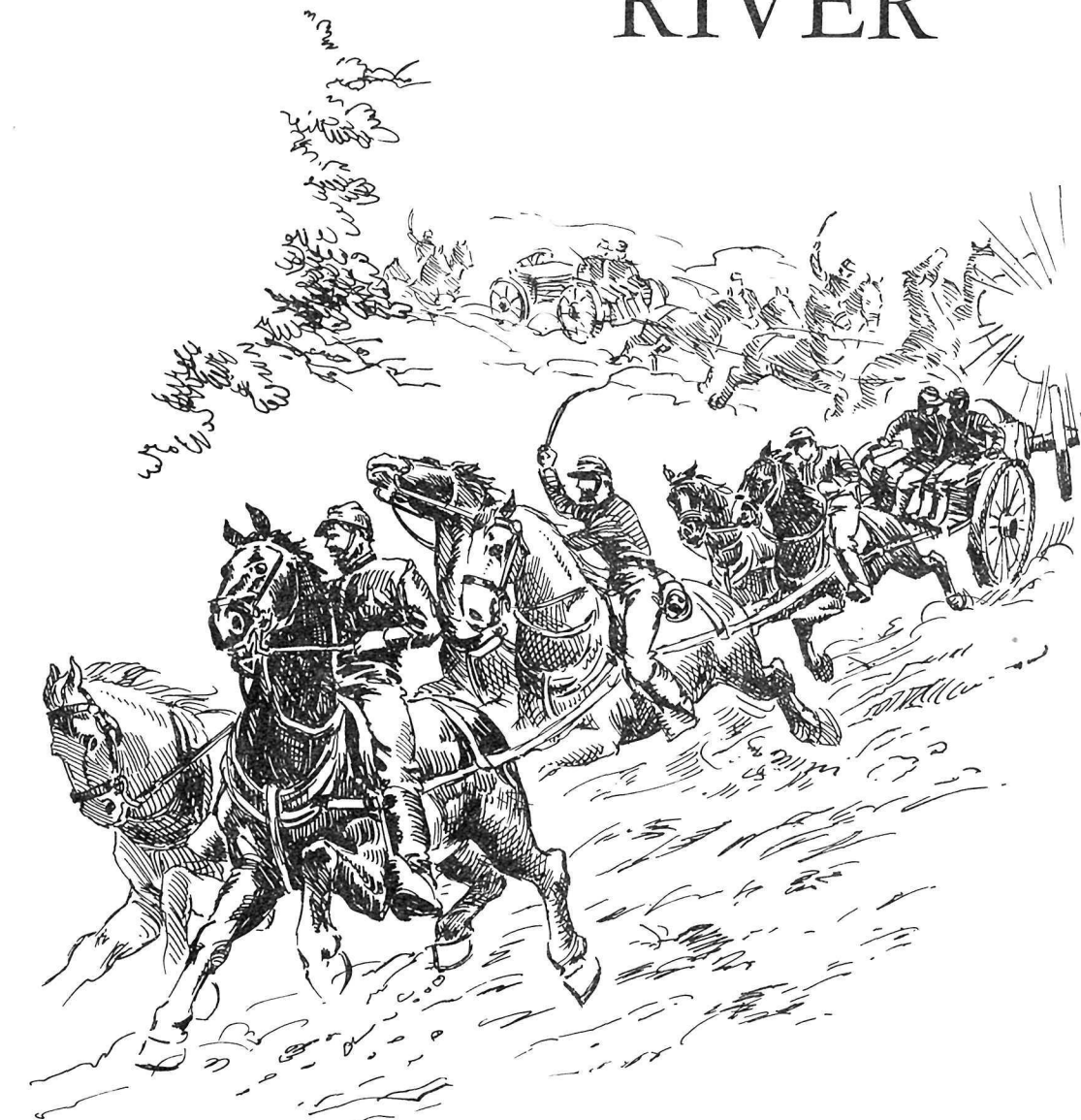
National Park Service

Conrad L. Wirth, *Director*



COVER DESIGN: *Artillery being rushed into position.*

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