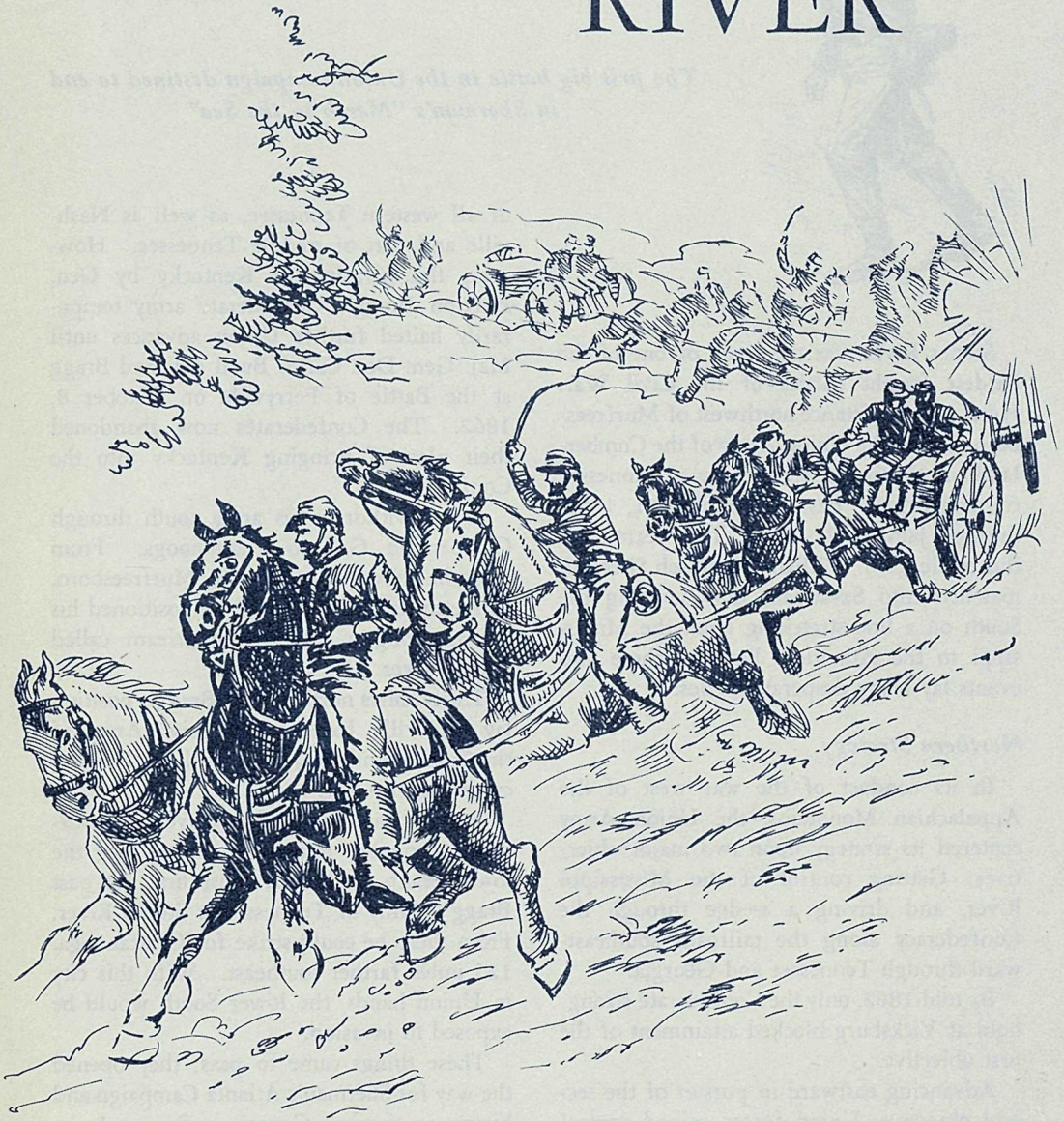


STONES RIVER



NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD
TENNESSEE



Stones River

NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD

The first big battle in the Union campaign destined to end in Sherman's "March to the Sea"

of all western Tennessee, as well as Nashville and part of middle Tennessee. However, the invasion of Kentucky by Gen. Braxton Bragg's Confederate army temporarily halted further Union advances until Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell defeated Bragg at the Battle of Perryville on October 8, 1862. The Confederates now abandoned their plan of bringing Kentucky into the Confederacy.

Bragg withdrew his army south through Cumberland Gap to Chattanooga. From there he moved northwest to Murfreesboro. Three miles past the town, he positioned his troops along a meandering stream called Stones River.

Thirty miles northwest of Bragg's position lay Nashville, base of the Union Army of the Cumberland, Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans commanding.

To continue the Union drive southeastward along the railroads running into the lower South, Rosecrans must first get past Bragg's Army of Tennessee at Stones River. From there he could strike for Chattanooga, 125 miles farther southeast. With this city in Union hands, the lower South would be exposed to invasion.

These things came to pass; they opened the way for Sherman's Atlanta Campaign and his sweep through Georgia to Savannah.

Stones River was the scene of one of the hardest fought battles of the Civil War. Here, a short distance northwest of Murfreesboro, Tenn., the Union Army of the Cumberland and the Confederate Army of Tennessee contended for 3 days—December 31, 1862, through January 2, 1863. Two years after this battle, Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman marched into Savannah, thus severing the South on a line stretching from the Mississippi to the Atlantic. Between these two events lay many desperate battles.

Northern Strategy

In its conduct of the war west of the Appalachian Mountains, the Union Army 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 mid-1862, only the Confederate stronghold at Vicksburg blocked attainment of the first objective.

Advancing eastward in pursuit of the second objective, Union forces gained control

Rosecrans Advances

On December 26, 1862, General Rosecrans marched the Union army out of Nashville and advanced against Bragg's position. By December 30, the Union troops faced the Confederates near Stones River.

But the advance had not been without incident. Moving swiftly with cavalry, Brig. Gen. Joseph Wheeler raided the Union army, burning and destroying wagon trains and harassing the rearguard. Starting on the night of December 29, he completely circled the Union army, returning to the Confederate lines early on December 31. Wheeler had destroyed nearly a million dollars worth of Federal property and had taken 700 prisoners.

The First Day of Battle, December 31, 1862

On the evening of December 30, General Bragg devised his plan of attack—an assault against the right wing of the Union army the next morning at dawn. His goal: To drive the Federals into the northern loop of Stones River. Meanwhile, General Rosecrans conceived an almost identical plan of battle. He intended to cross Stones River and attack the Confederate right wing, forcing it back upon

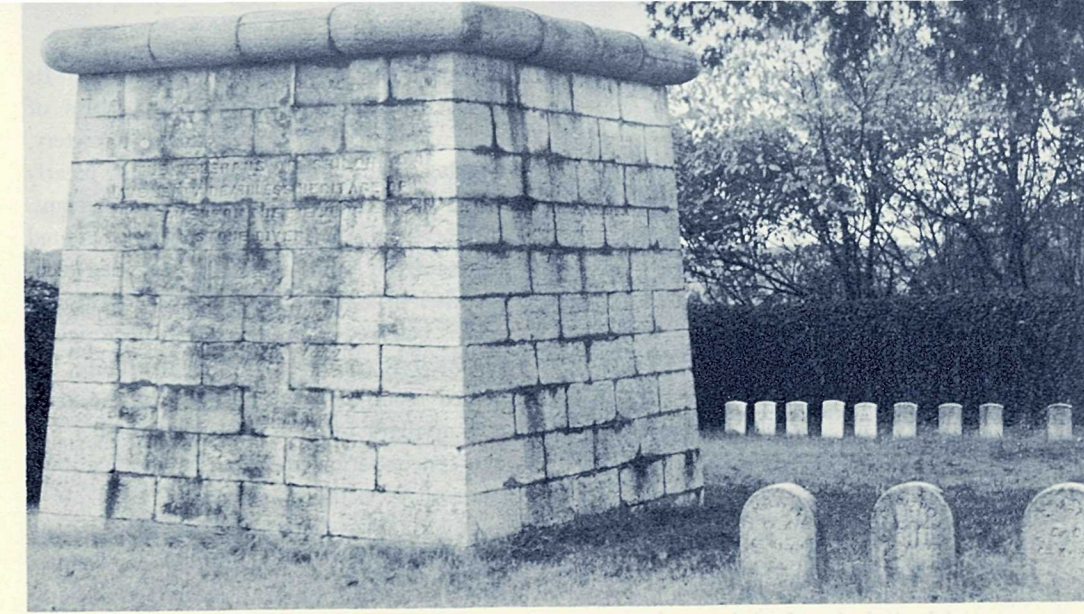
the southerly course of the stream. This movement, if successful, would place part of the Union army between the Confederates and their supply base at Murfreesboro.

Striking first, the Confederates had the advantage. At daybreak on the 31st, they furiously assaulted the Union right wing, driving it and part of the center back through the surrounding cedar woods to the Nashville Pike. Only inspired fighting by Brig. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan's right-wing brigade and stubborn holding of most of the center by Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas averted a Union rout.

All thought of the Union attack against Bragg's right wing was now dropped. Troops assigned to the attack were rushed back to the highway to form a new defensive 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 cedar woods, they met heavy fire from these fresh troops. Stunned by their losses, the Confederates finally fell back to the protection of the woods.

Bragg had ordered Maj. Gen. John C. Breckinridge to roll up the Union center after the Union right was driven back. Had Breckinridge fulfilled these orders at the crit-



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

ical point in the battle—just before noon—it is very possible that this added blow would have crumpled the Union troops holding desperately at the new line along the pike and the railroad. As it was, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois men, their ammunition expended, used rifle butts and bayonets to repel the Confederate attack. Fighting was especially close and desperate in the vicinity where the Hazen Brigade Monument now stands and where Van Cleve Lane meets the Nashville Pike.

Artillery Decisive on January 2, 1863

Throughout the next day the opposing armies faced each other without fighting. Rosecrans moved part of his left wing to high ground across Stones River, a strong position that commanded the Confederate right. Bragg felt he must remove this threat. He assembled his best troops for an assault timed to take place about an hour before dusk on January 2. The attack succeeded and drove Union troops in headlong retreat across Stones River.

At this juncture, Maj. Gen. Thomas L. Crittenden, commanding the Union left, observed the action and saw the Confederates driving Union troops across the river. He quickly ordered his chief of artillery, Capt. John E. Mendenhall, to support the infantry.

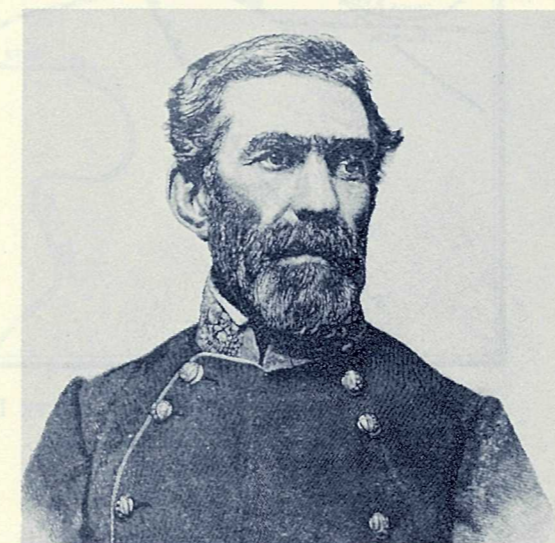
With incredible speed, Mendenhall assembled guns from 8 batteries, totaling 58 pieces. He placed them on the heights about 100 yards from the river where they commanded the field of Confederate attack beyond. Roaring out more than 100 rounds a minute, the massed fire from these guns blasted the attacking Confederate troops. The result was carnage. A successful, dashing charge suddenly turned into retreat, then rout. In a matter of minutes, 1,800 Confederates fell killed or wounded. Following up the Confederate reverse, the Union troops regained their position on the heights.

This abrupt turning of the fortune of battle was due entirely to Mendenhall's concentrated artillery—perhaps the outstanding instance of field combat in the Civil War where artillery was the decisive factor.

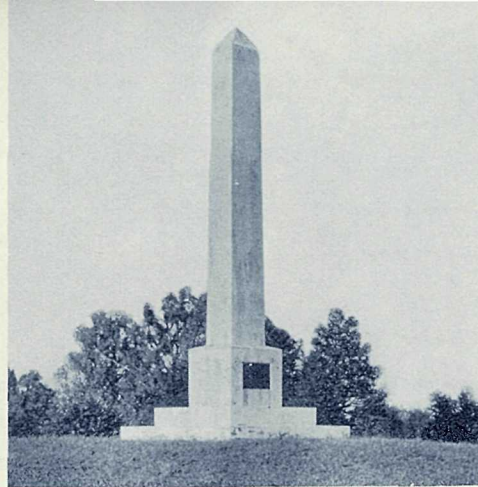
Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans.



Gen. Braxton Bragg.



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 inspiration of its people.



Artillery Monument was erected in 1906 by the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railroad, through its president, Maj. John W. Thomas. It marks the Union artillery position which turned back the last Confederate charge.

On January 3, under the pall of the preceding day's disaster, General Bragg ordered the withdrawal of his army to Tullahoma, about 40 miles southeast of Murfreesboro. The Federals thereupon occupied Murfreesboro on January 4.

Both sides had some claim to victory. Bragg's men had captured 28 Union cannon and had taken more than 3,000 prisoners. But the Federals held the field and occupied Murfreesboro, while the Confederates retreated.

Both sides suffered terrible losses in the Battle of Stones River. Of 38,000 Confederate troops engaged, some 10,000 were casualties; of 45,000 Union troops engaged, about 13,000 were casualties.

The Park

Stones River National Military Park was established by act of Congress on March 3, 1927; on April 22, 1960, its designation

was changed to National Battlefield. Its 344-acre area includes important parts of the battlefield and the National Cemetery, which contains about 6,400 burials. Nearly 6,000 are Union soldiers, 2,562 unknowns.

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 area, memorializes the site of Mendenhall's 58-gun concentration that decided the final outcome of the battle on January 2, 1863.

Stones River National Battlefield is one of several Civil War battlefields in Tennessee administered by the National Park Service. Easily reached from Murfreesboro and Nashville are Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, Shiloh National Military Park, and Fort Donelson National Military Park.

Location

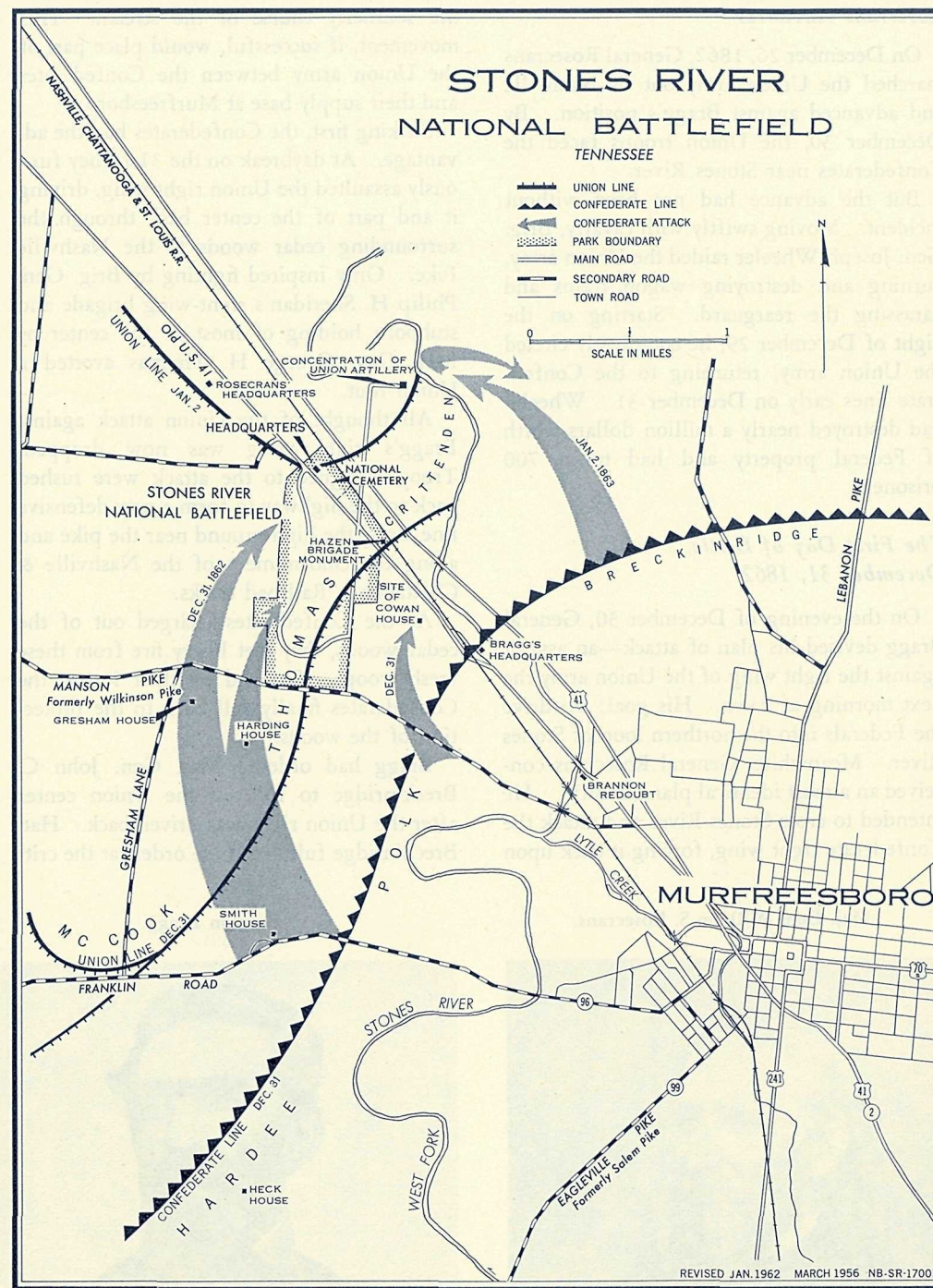
The National Battlefield is 3 miles northwest of Murfreesboro and 30 miles southeast of Nashville on U.S. 41.

About Your Visit

You may obtain further information about this and other areas of the National Park System at the headquarters building in the National Cemetery every day from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Arrangements for tours may be made with the superintendent.

Administration

Stones River National Battlefield is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Murfreesboro, Tenn., is in immediate charge.

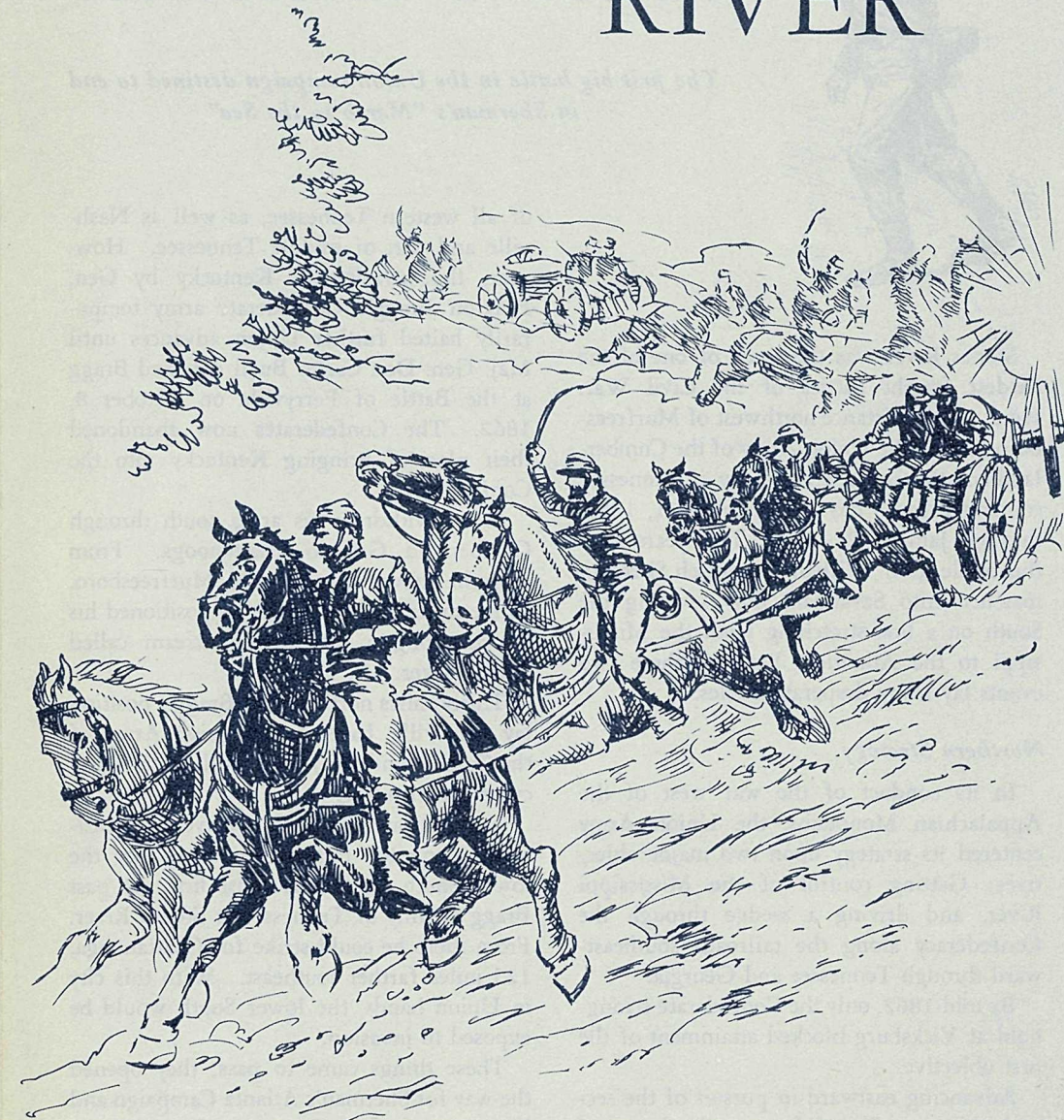


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COVER DESIGN: *Artillery being rushed into position.*

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