

Shiloh

National Military Park
Tennessee

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

During the winter of 1861-62 Federal forces pushing southward from St. Louis, Mo., captured Forts Henry and Donelson on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers. This action forced Gen. A. S. Johnston to abandon southern Kentucky and much of West and Middle Tennessee, including Nashville. After withdrawing further south, he established a new line covering the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, the only direct railroad link to Richmond and Memphis. Realizing that he could not wait for another Federal advance, Johnston began concentrating 44,000 men at Corinth, Miss., whence he hoped to take the offensive and destroy Gen. U.S. Grant's Union Army of the Tennessee before it could be joined by Gen. D. C. Buell's Army of the Ohio.

The Federals had not expected the rapid collapse of the Southern defenses; thus there was a delay before Grant's Army of the Tennessee, 40,000 strong, moved south along the Tennessee River toward Pittsburg Landing, 32 kilometers (22 miles) northeast of Corinth. Ordered to wait there until Buell's army joined him, Grant camped his men in the woods and fields around Shiloh Church. Concerned about the large number of raw recruits in his army, Grant drilled his men rather than fortify his position.

Johnston's attack on Grant was originally planned for April 4, but repeated delays postponed it 48 hours. As a result, Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard, Johnston's second in command, feared that the element of surprise had been lost and recommended withdrawing to Corinth. But Johnston refused to consider retreat.

When Johnston's Army of Mississippi hit the Federal camps on the morning of April 6, the Confederates achieved complete surprise. (The Union division commanders had done little or no patrolling, and the senior commander on the field, Gen. W. T. Sherman, treated all reports of Confederate troops in the area with contempt.) Some

Northern troops fought doggedly to hold their line; others fell back and re-formed elsewhere. Many who had never been in combat before fled for safety to the Tennessee River. The Southern army rolled over one Union position after another until noon. Then, along the Sunken Road, the Federals finally established and held a line that stopped the Southern advance. Confederate soldiers knew they had struck a "Hornets' Nest", and named it that. Rather than seek a way around the stronghold, the Southerners charged the position repeatedly.

None of these attacks succeeded until Confederate Gen. Daniel Ruggles brought up 62 cannon, the largest artillery concentration until then seen on a North American battlefield. Under cover of the hammering guns, Confederate infantry swept forward, surrounded the Union defenders and captured most of Gen. Benjamin Prentiss' division. That sacrifice bought time for Grant to establish a final defense line near Pittsburg Landing.

To the right and left of the Hornets' Nest, Federal forces fell back before the Confederate attack, and the fighting became a confused slugging match. On both sides, regiments became disorganized and companies disintegrated. Johnston was killed while trying to push home attacks on the river side of the battlefield to isolate the Unionists from the landing, and Beauregard took over the Confederate command.

By late afternoon Grant's surviving troops were safe in their final line. His chief of artillery, Col. J. D. Webster, had established a line of 53 guns on the heights around Pittsburg Landing. The Confederates, now as disorganized as the Federals, tried the flanks of the Federal position. The Union right beat them off easily. The vanguard of Buell's army crossed the Tennessee and filed into position on Grant's left covering Pittsburg Landing. Union infantry, artillery,

and gunboat fire on that flank hurled back the Confederate attempt to cross the rugged Dill Creek terrain, and the fighting sputtered out for the night. While Confederates tried to reorganize, Northern gunboats sent salvos crashing into their lines at 15-minute intervals, and the remainder of Buell's army crossed the river.

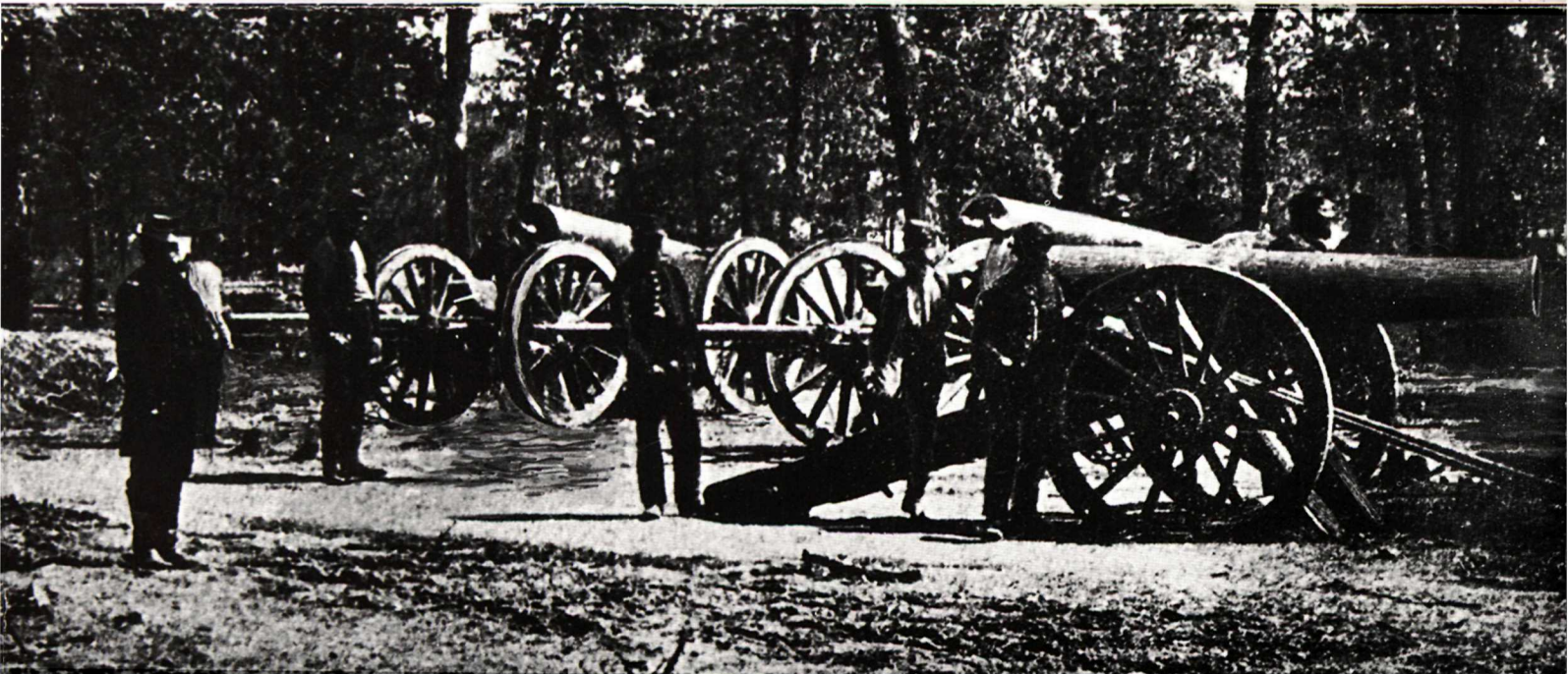
By dawn on April 7, the combined Federal armies numbered 55,000 men. Beauregard, unaware that all of Buell's army had arrived, planned to continue the attack and drive the Northerners into the river. At about 6 a.m. the Confederates went on the offensive and were, at first, successful. The stronger Union armies, however, soon began to push the Confederates back. Realizing that he had lost the initiative, Beauregard tried to break the Union drive by counterattacking at Water Oaks Pond. The Federal advance was stopped, but their line did not break. Low on ammunition and food and with 15,000 of his men killed, wounded, or missing, Beauregard knew he could go no further. He withdrew beyond Shiloh Church and began the weary march back to Corinth. The exhausted Federals did not pursue. The battle was over.

On April 8, Grant sent Sherman south along the Corinth Road to try to catch the retreating Confederates. Sixteen kilometers (10 miles) out he ran into the Southern rear-guard under Col. N. B. Forrest. Sherman abandoned the pursuit.

In late April and May the Federals crept toward Corinth and seized it, while an amphibious force on the Mississippi was destroying the Confederate River Defense Fleet and capturing Memphis. From these bases the Federals pushed on down the Mississippi to besiege Vicksburg. After the surrender of Vicksburg and the fall of Port Hudson in the summer of 1863, the Confederacy was cut in half. The war went on, but careful observers knew that the South must lose.

Back cover: Defenders of Grant's last line at Shiloh, April 6, 1862.

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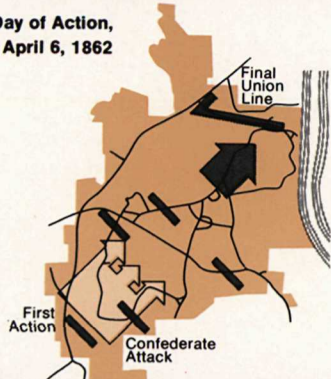
Albert Sidney Johnston
P.G.T. Beauregard

Ulysses S. Grant
Don Carlos Buell
William T. Sherman

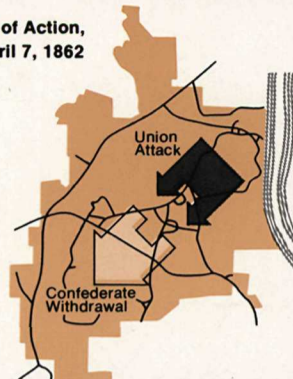


The battlefield tour, shown on the map below, starts at the visitor center where exhibits and a 25-minute film provide an introduction to the battle and the war. The maps at right show schematically the troop movements of the armies engaged during the 2-day battle and, when used in conjunction with the tour map, help to provide orientation to the ground on which the action took place and make the individual tour stops more meaningful. Uniformed interpreters will be glad to answer any questions you might have about the battle or the tour.

First Day of Action,
Sunday, April 6, 1862



Second Day of Action,
Monday, April 7, 1862



Confederate Burial Trench/4

The largest of five trenches in which Southern dead were buried. More than 700 soldiers lie here.

Water Oaks Pond/5

Trying to regain the initiative on April 7, the Confederates counterattacked through this wet weather pond. They stopped the Union advance but did not break the Union line. Beauregard then withdrew his army to Corinth.

Ruggles' Battery/3

After repeated infantry attacks against the Hornets' Nest had failed, Confederate Gen. Dan Ruggles brought up 62 guns to bombard the Union troops. A final Southern attack under the cover of this line of artillery broke the Union position and resulted in the capture of Gen. Benjamin Prentiss' division of 1,200 men.

Sunken Road and Hornets' Nest/2

Stunned by surprise attack and forced to abandon position after position, Union troops were ordered to hold this road against the Southern attackers at all costs. Their brave action gave Grant the time he needed to establish a strong defensive position closer to Pittsburg Landing.

Grant's Last Line/1

While the men in the Hornets' Nest held the Confederates at bay, General Grant formed a defensive line along this ridge. This line of artillery marks the final position of the Union army on April 6.

Pittsburg Landing/14

Federal base during the battle and, for many years, a landing for river steamers. Here Buell's Army of the Ohio crossed the river to join Grant on the late afternoon and night of April 6. Thus reinforced, the Federals were able to force Beauregard to withdraw.

Shiloh Church/6

Here stood the original Shiloh Church, a Methodist meeting house, from which the battle took its name. The name Shiloh is a biblical word meaning "place of peace." The present church was built in 1949.

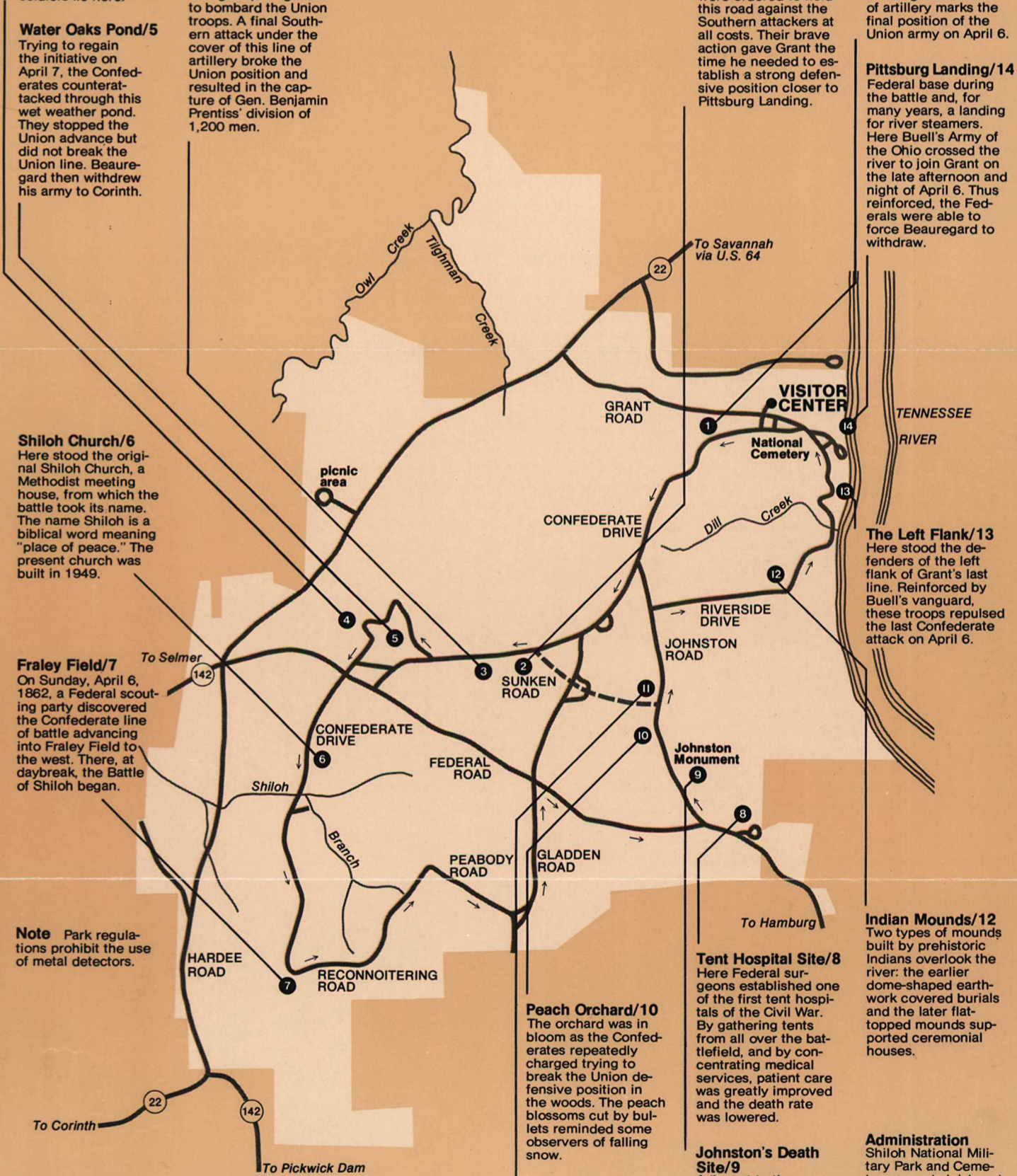
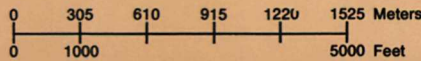
Fraley Field/7

On Sunday, April 6, 1862, a Federal scouting party discovered the Confederate line of battle advancing into Fraley Field to the west. There, at daybreak, the Battle of Shiloh began.

Note Park regulations prohibit the use of metal detectors.

Safety Make your visit a safe and enjoyable one. You will be sharing the park roads with others.

Motorists, cyclists, and hikers—all should use caution. Be extremely careful near the river banks.



The Left Flank/13

Here stood the defenders of the left flank of Grant's last line. Reinforced by Buell's vanguard, these troops repulsed the last Confederate attack on April 6.

Indian Mounds/12

Two types of mounds built by prehistoric Indians overlook the river: the earlier dome-shaped earthenwork covered burials and the later flat-topped mounds supported ceremonial houses.

Tent Hospital Site/8

Here Federal surgeons established one of the first tent hospitals of the Civil War. By gathering tents from all over the battlefield, and by concentrating medical services, patient care was greatly improved and the death rate was lowered.

Johnston's Death Site/9

Adjacent to the monument stands a young oak tree at the site of the oak tree under which the Confederate army commander, Gen. A. S. Johnston, was mortally wounded.

Peach Orchard/10

The orchard was in bloom as the Confederates repeatedly charged trying to break the Union defensive position in the woods. The peach blossoms cut by bullets reminded some observers of falling snow.

Bloody Pond/11

During the battle, soldiers of both sides came here to drink and to bathe their wounds. Both men and horses died in the pond, their blood staining the water a dark red.