
America's Most Endangered Battlefields

*A Guide to the Ten Most Endangered
Civil War Sites in the United States*



*The Civil War Preservation Trust
February 2001*

About CWPT

With 32,000 members, the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT) is the largest nonprofit battlefield preservation organization in the United States. Its purpose is to preserve and protect our nation's endangered Civil War battlefields and to promote appreciation and stewardship of these hallowed grounds through education and heritage tourism.

CWPT's principal goal is to preserve at least 2,000 acres of battlefield land annually, through outright purchases, conservation easements and partnerships with federal, state, and local governments. Among the sites rescued by the organization in the past year are parcels at Cross Keys and Brandy Station in Virginia, Mine Creek in Kansas, Ft. Moultrie in South Carolina, and Shiloh in Tennessee. Over the years, CWPT has helped preserve more than 60 sites in 16 states totaling nearly 11,000 acres.

In addition, CWPT maintains several outreach and education programs in support of battlefield preservation. These programs include: *Hallowed Ground*, our quarterly magazine; the Civil War Discovery Trail, a National Millennium Trail that links 500 sites in 28 states; Civil War Explorer, an interactive computer program that allows museum visitors to experience the war and its consequences; and *Voices of the Civil War*, a traveling exhibit that is currently touring the United States.



Above: Worm fence at Mansfield, La.

Right: Gen. George Meade's headquarters, Gettysburg, Pa.



Introduction

This year is the 140th anniversary of the Civil War, the most tragic conflict in American history. For four long years, North and South clashed in 10,500 battles and skirmishes that sounded the death knell for slavery and defined us as a nation. More than 625,000 soldiers and 50,000 civilians perished as a result of the war.

CWPT is marking the occasion with an exposé on the most significant and most endangered of these battlefields. The sites identified in the report range from household names to the relatively obscure, but all have one critical feature in common — each one is in danger of being lost forever. The ten sites included in the study were selected based on geographic location, military significance, and the immediacy of current threats. Most of the sites were nominated by CWPT’s membership.

In analyzing each site, CWPT consulted a landmark study by the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission (CWSAC) that prioritized sites according to their historic significance and state of preservation. CWPT has used CWSAC’s rating system throughout the report. Battlefields are ranked from Priority I (sites considered most threatened) to Priority IV (sites considered lost). CWSAC also ranks battlefields from A (most significant to the course of the war) to D (sites of local importance).

CWPT hopes that this report will raise public awareness of the plight of America’s remaining Civil War battlefields. Seven generations after Fort Sumter, these battlefields are among the few remaining tangible links to our tumultuous past.

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Above: War horse monument, Middleburg, Va.



Left: Cravens House, Lookout Mountain, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Allatoona

Georgia

October 5, 1864

“Your communication demanding surrender of my command I acknowledge receipt of, and would respectfully reply that we are prepared for the ‘needless effusion of blood’ whenever it is agreeable to you.”

— Brigadier General John Corse, U.S.A.

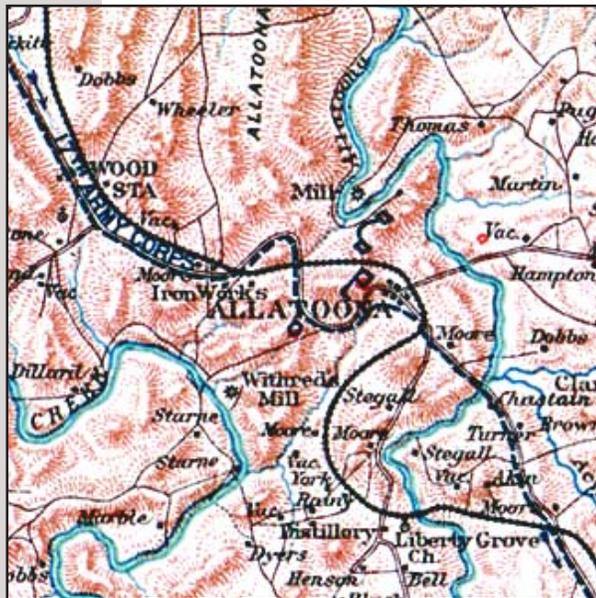
History: After the fall of Atlanta, the Confederate Army of Tennessee under Gen. John B. Hood sought to lure Union Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman’s much larger army northward by striking its supply line — the Western & Atlantic Railroad.

Perhaps the best opportunity to break up the railroad was at Allatoona Pass, a cut in the mountains approximately 25 miles north of Atlanta. On October 5, 1864, Confederate forces under Maj. Gen. Samuel French came tantalizingly close to capturing the pass and shredding Sherman’s supply line. However, the railroad was saved by a handful of Union troops holed up in Allatoona’s Star Fort.

French eventually demanded the surrender of Union Brig. Gen. John Corse, who curtly refused. Although only 5,300 men were involved in the battle, the fighting resulted in 1,600 casualties — 30 percent of the total engaged.

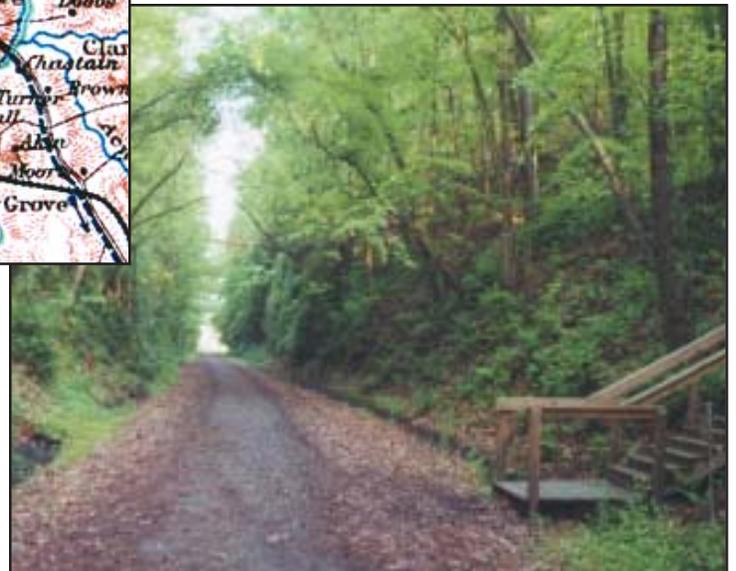
Current Status: According to the American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) of the National Park Service (NPS), only 272 acres of the 1,297-acre battlefield are preserved. CWSAC classifies Allatoona as a Priority I, Class B site. CWPT is concerned about the threat of commercial development at Allatoona.

The population of Bartow County, where Allatoona is located, has doubled in the past two decades. A nearby interchange for I-75 also puts the battlefield at risk. CWPT is currently seeking to preserve eight acres at the site, including the unpreserved half of the famous Star Fort.



Above: Allatoona and vicinity, 1864.

Right: Old railroad bed, Allatoona, Ga.



Brice's Cross Roads

Mississippi

June 10, 1864

History: While the principal armies in the western theatre were embraced in a deadly dance along the Western & Atlantic Railroad, a cavalry battle was brewing in northwestern Mississippi. It was a battle that would make Confederate cavalry chieftain Nathan Bedford Forrest a legend.

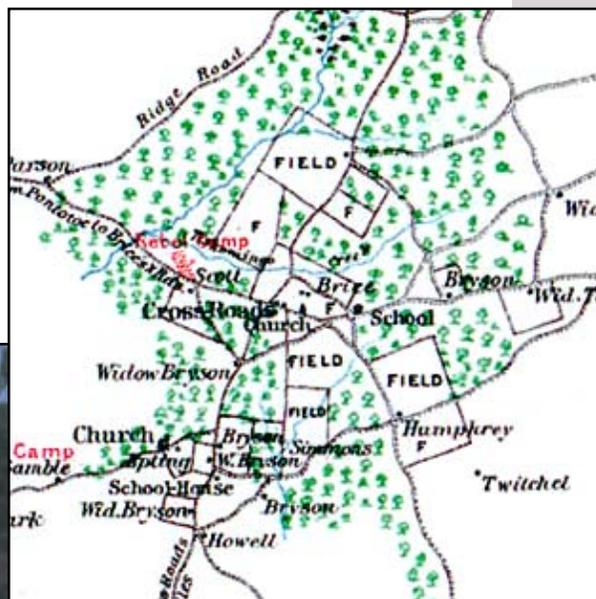
Described in the *Historical Times Encyclopedia of the Civil War* as “one of the most humiliating defeats in the history of the U.S. Army,” Brice’s Cross Roads pitted Forrest’s butternut cavalry against a combined force of Union infantry and cavalry under the command of Brig. Gen. Samuel D. Sturgis. With 8,100 men, Sturgis outnumbered Forrest’s 3,500 troopers more than two to one.

Despite the odds, Forrest was able to defeat Sturgis in detail by pouncing on his cavalry units before the slower-moving blue infantry arrived at the crossroads. In the ensuing battle and retreat, Sturgis lost 2,600 men, 250 wagons, 18 cannons and approximately 5,000 stands of small arms. The only bright spot for Sturgis was the heroic effort of two regiments of United States Colored Troops (USCT) under Col. Edward Bouton. They held Forrest off long enough for the rest of the army to escape capture.

Current Status: 837 acres of this 2,085-acre site are protected, including 836 acres preserved by CWPT. Brice’s Cross Roads is ranked as a Priority I, Class B site by CWSAC. The principal threat is increasing traffic and possible roadway expansion along Routes 45 and 370.

“...Forrest is the very devil, and I think he has some of our troops under cower.”

— Major General William T. Sherman, U.S.A.



Above: Period map of Brice's Cross Roads.

Left: Brice's Cross Roads, Miss.



Fort Fisher

North Carolina

December 7 – 27, 1864 and January 13 – 15, 1865

“It was the most terrible storm of iron and lead that I have ever seen during the war...shells exploding so fast that it would seem to be one roaring sound.”

— Confederate artilleryman stationed at Fort Fisher

History: Throughout the Civil War, the blockaded South had to depend on a mere handful of seaports for vital imports from abroad. Among these, Wilmington, N.C. was perhaps the most important. By late 1864, Wilmington had become the last major port of entry into the beleaguered Confederacy.

Fort Fisher was all that kept this last tenuous link with the outside world open. Union Rear Admiral David D. Porter referred to the fort as “the door through which this rebellion is fed.” In late 1864, the Union high command began to put plans in motion to capture Fort Fisher and close the port of Wilmington.

The first attempt to take the fort was an embarrassment. Notoriously inept Union Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler cooked up a scheme to use a “powder boat” full of explosives to blow Fort Fisher off the map. Predictably, the plan failed. A second attempt, in mid-January 1865, was more successful. Union forces under Porter and Brig. Gen. Alfred H. Terry quickly cut Fort Fisher off from the Confederate forces defending Wilmington and forced its surrender.

Current Status: CWSAC ranks Fort Fisher as a Priority IV, Class A battlefield.

The principal threat to Fort Fisher is not man, but Mother Nature. Repeated hurricanes during the past four years have taken a severe toll on the fragmented remains of the fort. However, the state just spent \$1 million to repair the fort’s protective revetment, potentially giving the site a new lease on life.



Above: U.S. Navy map of Fort Fisher, 1865.

Right: Shephards Battery, Fort Fisher, N.C.



Gettysburg

Pennsylvania

July 1 – 3, 1863

History: Gettysburg will always be synonymous in the public's mind with the Civil War. Not only is it the site of the largest and most costly battle ever fought in the Americas, but it was also the inspiration for President Abraham Lincoln's immortal Gettysburg Address.

The armies were drawn to Gettysburg by its extensive road network. Even today, Gettysburg on a map looks much like the hub of a wagon wheel. Twelve major roads entered the town at the time of the battle.

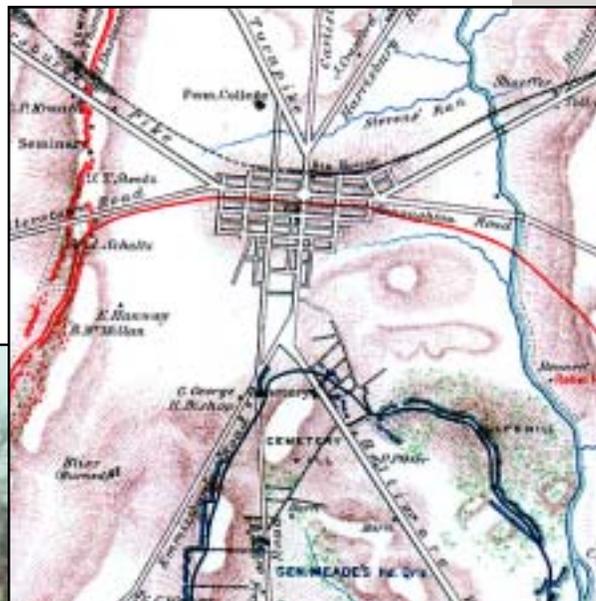
On the morning of July 1, approximately 170,000 soldiers in blue and gray were converging on Gettysburg. Three bloody days later, more than 50,000 of those men were casualties. The turning point of the war in the east had been reached, and Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's second invasion of the North had been thwarted, but at a dreadful cost.

Current Status: 4,731 acres of this 11,581-acre site are protected, including 183 acres preserved by CWPT. Gettysburg is ranked as a Priority I, Class A battlefield by CWSAC. The principal threat to the site is the road network that once drew the armies to the town. These roads continue to be a magnet for sprawl.

CWPT is also keeping an eye on the Baltimore Pike corridor to ensure the new NPS visitors center does not attract the same sort of chain restaurants and stores that currently plague Steinwehr Avenue.

“The terrible grandeur of that rain of missiles and that chaos of strange and terror-spreading sounds... can never be forgotten by those who survived it.”

— Colonel Norman J. Hall, U.S.A., describing Pickett's Charge



Above: The road network around Gettysburg, 1863.

Left: Chain restaurants and other stores along Steinwehr Avenue, Gettysburg, Pa.



Harpers Ferry

West Virginia

September 12 – 15, 1862

“...the clouds of smoke, rolling up from the tops of the various mountains, and the thunder of the guns reverberating among them, gave the idea of so many volcanoes.”

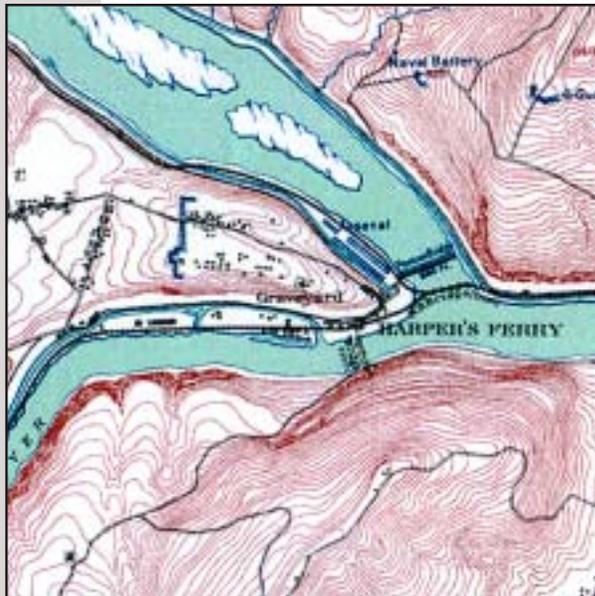
— Edward A. Moore,
Rockbridge Artillery,
C.S.A.

History: Although best known as the scene of John Brown’s abortive attempt to arm and liberate local slaves, Harpers Ferry is also the site of a famous 1862 battle. From the heights that surround the sleepy village, then-Maj. Gen. Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson orchestrated one of the largest mass surrenders in American history.

Jackson’s plan involved the precise coordination of three separate commands split between two wide rivers. Even today, with 21st-century technology and communications, such a plan would be difficult to coordinate successfully. In the early 1860s, only a commander of Jackson’s caliber and confidence could have pulled it off.

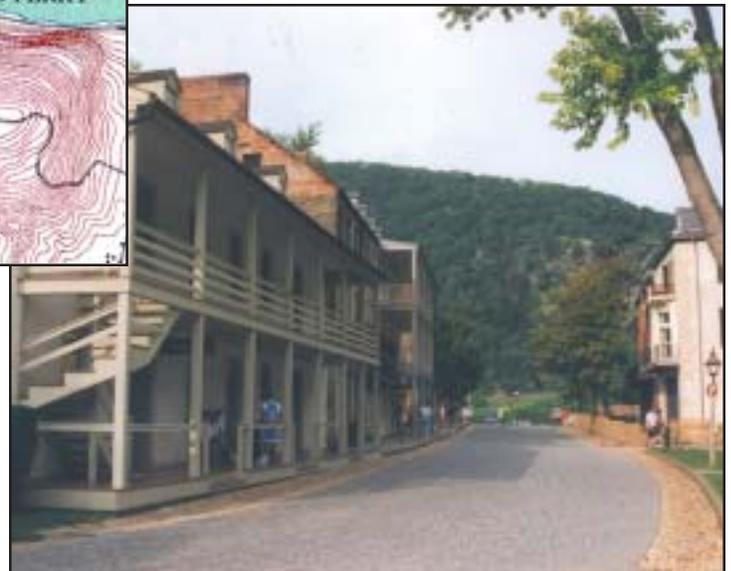
Despite the enormity of the task, Jackson made it look easy. He forced the Union commander to capitulate, along with 12,500 Union troops — the largest surrender of American troops until the Battle of the Bulge eight decades later. In his biography of Jackson, author James I. Robertson, Jr. writes: “Harpers Ferry was the most complete victory in the history of the Southern Confederacy.”

Current Status: 2,729 acres of this 7,199-acre site are protected, including 56 acres preserved by CWPT. CWSAC classifies Harpers Ferry as a Priority I, Class B battlefield. Two major tracts are currently unprotected: the 98-acre Murphy Farm and 280 acres on Schoolhouse Ridge. Without quick action, the Murphy property is likely to become a 188-home development with a 130-foot-high water tower that would ruin the pristine viewshed.



Above: Harpers Ferry and vicinity, 1862.

Right: Harpers Ferry, W. Va. today.



Loudoun Valley

Virginia

June 17 – 21, 1863

History: As the armies drifted northward in mid-June 1863, a series of cavalry battles were fought for possession of the Loudoun Valley — the area between the Bull Run and Blue Ridge Mountains. These battles were primarily between the troopers of Maj. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton and Maj. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart.

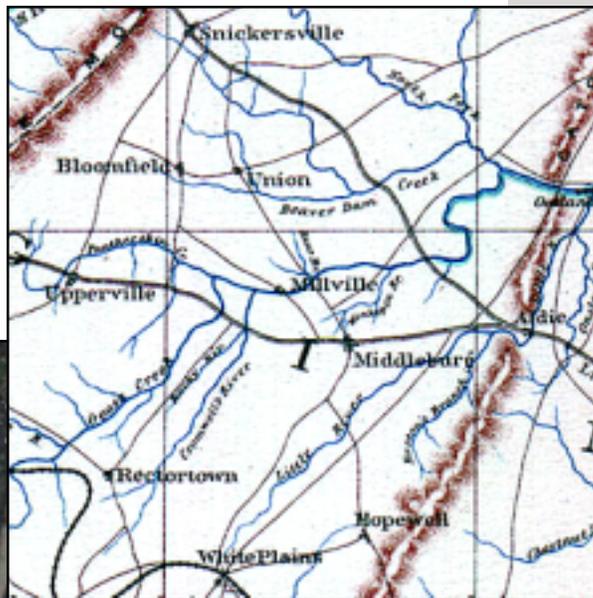
For the South, the purpose of these battles was clear. Stuart and his cavalry were to screen the Confederate army as it moved through the Shenandoah Valley toward Pennsylvania. For their Northern counterparts, the goal was to engage the enemy's vaunted cavalry and learn what mischief Gen. Robert E. Lee's infantry was up to.

In the end, both sides could claim victory. In the battles of Aldie, Middleburg and Upperville, Stuart was consistently pushed closer and closer to the crucial Shenandoah Valley gaps. Pleasonton's troopers performed extremely well, but the Confederate screen was never penetrated, and the blue cavalry returned without the vital information needed to stop Lee's invasion plans.

Current Status: Aldie, Middleburg and Upperville are Priority III, Class C battlefields. All three sites are potential victims of the sprawl in Northern Virginia that has already claimed sites like Chantilly. An alarming study by the National Resource Inventory recently concluded that land in the area is being developed twice as fast as the population growth. In addition, a 30-acre commercial development is planned for Gilbert's Corner, less than two miles east of Aldie on Route 50.

"...the Federal bullets whirred by our heads and were heard striking the rocks in a manner neither comforting nor musical."

— Lieutenant George Beale, 9th Virginia Cavalry, C.S.A.



Above: Wartime map of the Loudoun Valley.

Left: Upperville area today. Photograph by Deborah Fitts.



Mansfield

Louisiana

April 8, 1864

“Suddenly there was a rush, shot, the crashing of trees, and the breaking down of rails, the rush and scamper of men. We found ourselves swallowed up, as it were, in a hissing, seething, bubbling whirlpool of agitated men.”

— Reporter John Russell Young

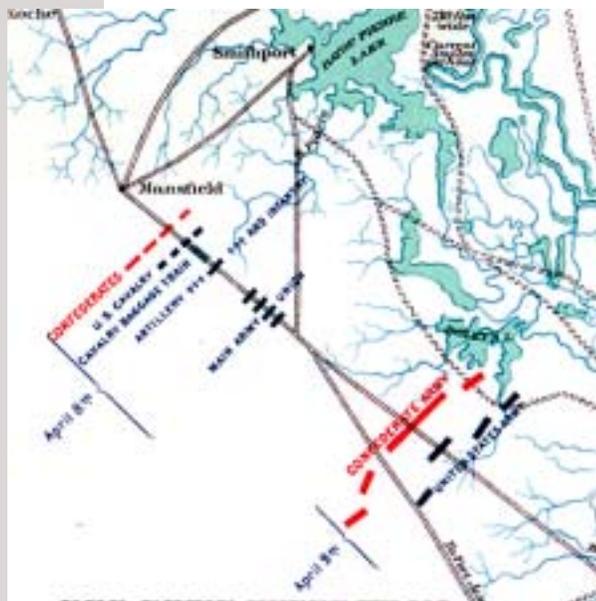
History: Intent on wresting control of Louisiana and Texas from the Confederacy, in March 1864 Union Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks began a protracted, two-month campaign up the Red River Valley. His immediate goal was to capture Shreveport, collecting bales of contraband cotton along the way.

Unfortunately for the inept Banks, his opponent was Confederate Maj. Gen. Richard Taylor, one of the South’s most reliable field commanders. For several weeks, Taylor shadowed Banks’s advance toward Shreveport, looking for a chance to strike his adversary. At Mansfield, he found the opportunity he sought.

Taylor drew up his small army astride the Old Stage Road. At first he took a defensive posture, hoping to receive additional reinforcements before the battle began in earnest. Eventually, Taylor grew impatient and struck the Union army first with his left, and then with his right. Despite heavy casualties, the result was a decisive victory that marked the end of Banks’s invasion and Federal dreams of taking Louisiana out of the war. It was also one of the South’s last field victories of the war.

Current Status: Mansfield is one of the most important Civil War sites in Louisiana.

It is ranked Priority II, Class A by CWSAC. According to The Conservation Fund, 177 acres of this site are protected. Of these, CWPT has preserved 134 acres. An adjacent lignite mining operation and residential sprawl threaten the historic site.



Above: Mansfield and vicinity, 1864.

Right: A lignite mining operation adjacent to Mansfield, La.



Raymond

Mississippi

May 12, 1863

History: In late April 1863, then-Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant launched the campaign that secured the Mississippi River for the Union cause and established his own place in military history. He stole a march on his counterpart, Lt. Gen. John Pemberton, and placed his troops south of the Confederate bastion of Vicksburg.

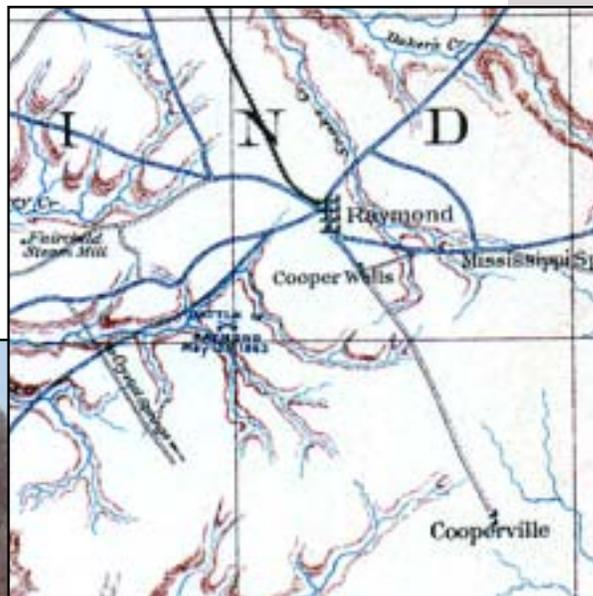
By early May, Grant was well established on the east bank of the Mississippi and began pushing toward the Big Black River. On May 12, his right wing, commanded by Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson, was struck near Raymond by a lone Rebel brigade under Brig. Gen. John Gregg. The result was a confused slugging match that went on for six hours, and convinced Grant that he had to capture the Mississippi capital at Jackson before proceeding to Vicksburg.

Raymond should have been no contest. McPherson outnumbered his opponent three to one. However, battle smoke and thick undergrowth prevented both sides from discovering that Gregg's brigade was woefully outmatched by McPherson's two divisions. Although McPherson further exacerbated the problem by committing his men piecemeal, eventually Gregg was forced to abandon the field.

Current Status: Only 40 acres of the 4,024-acre site are protected, all of them preserved by CWPT. CWSAC classifies Raymond as a Priority I, Class B battlefield. Development pressure along Highway 18 (the wartime Utica Road) emanating from nearby Jackson is the principal threat to this site.

“For two hours, the contest raged furiously... The Creek was running red with the precious blood spilt for our country.”

— Sergeant Osborn H. Oldroyd, 20th Ohio Infantry, U.S.A.



Above: Wartime map of Raymond, Miss.

Left: Historical marker, Raymond, Miss.



Stones River

Tennessee

December 31, 1862 – January 2, 1863

“I can never forget ... you gave us a hard-earned victory, which, had there been a defeat instead, the nation could scarcely have lived over.”

— Abraham Lincoln to Major General William Rosecrans

History: As 1862 came to an end, one last bloodletting was developing just north of Murfreesboro. The struggle would pit Gen. Braxton Bragg’s Army of Tennessee against a Union army that went into the battle without a name, but would soon be called the Army of the Cumberland. The fight would decide the fate of middle Tennessee.

The first day was a near disaster for the Federal forces, under the command of Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans. Bragg launched a tremendous attack against the Union right flank, eventually pushing it back in a manner similar to a closing pocket knife. However, the men in blue persevered and were able to hold their own for the remainder of Dec. 31.

Bragg expected Rosecrans to retreat during the night and was dumbfounded to see him strengthening his lines on New Year’s Day. On Jan. 2, amazed that the enemy was still in his front, Bragg launched a desperate charge that was doomed before it even started. That night Bragg retreated, leaving Rosecrans in command of the field.

Current Status: 713 acres of this battlefield are protected, including 24 acres preserved by CWPT. CWSAC ranked it Priority IV, Class A because of the fragmented nature of the site. NPS has identified 400 additional acres at Stones River that should be preserved, but the price tag for the property is an unreachable \$20 million. Stones River is located in Rutherford County, the fastest-growing county in Tennessee.



Above: Stones River at the time of the battle.

Right: Factory overlooks Stones River National Cemetery.



The Wilderness

Virginia

May 5 – 6, 1864

History: The first clash between Civil War legends Gen. Robert E. Lee and Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant took place in the Wilderness, a wooded area along the Orange Turnpike and Orange Plank Road west of Fredericksburg. William Swinton, a Northern reporter who would later write a history of the war, remarked that it was “impossible to conceive a field worse adapted to the movements of a grand army.”

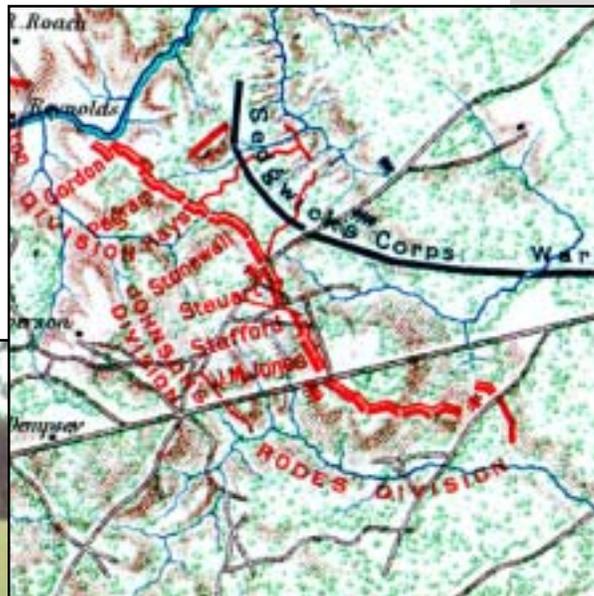
Poorly adapted or not, for two days a massive conflict ensued among the trees and scrub growth of the Wilderness. Confusion was the order of the day. Few officers could see more than a handful of their men, and regiments were lost or became snarled with other units. Even worse, fires ignited by gunpowder swept through the forest, burning alive many of those too crippled to be moved.

Stymied by Lee, Grant finally abandoned the Wilderness for more open ground further south. Lee followed, blocking Grant again at Spotsylvania. Together, they left behind more than 25,000 dead and wounded in the Wilderness.

Current Status: 2,253 acres of the 13,181-acre battlefield are protected. The site is ranked Priority I, Class A by CWSAC. Intense residential and commercial development pressure along the Orange Turnpike and the old Orange Plank Road threatens the site. CWPT is particularly concerned about 455 acres near Fawn Lake that are targeted for development. Congress has appropriated \$6 million to protect this site; however, the owner is holding out for more.

“It was as though Christian men had turned to fiends, and hell itself had usurped the place of Earth.”

— Lieutenant Colonel Horace Porter, U.S.A.



Above: The opposing armies along the Orange Turnpike, 1864.

Left: The Widow Tapp Farm, the Wilderness, Va.



Other Sites at Risk

More than 10,000 armed conflicts occurred during the American Civil War — an enormous number that often complicated battlefield preservation efforts. Recognizing the problem, Congress directed CWSAC to prioritize these conflicts, ranking the battles according to importance and status of preservation. Using this criteria, CWSAC eventually identified 384 battles in 26 states as historically significant.

Needless to say, pruning even CWSAC's more manageable list of endangered battlefields down to just ten was no simple task. Listed below are fifteen vitally important Civil War battlefields that did not make the final ten. Rest assured, CWPT will be keeping an eye open for preservation opportunities at each of these hallowed battlegrounds.

Bentonville, North Carolina
Bristoe Station, Virginia
Buffington Island, Ohio
Cedar Creek, Virginia

Chancellorsville, Virginia
Corinth, Mississippi
Fort Heiman, Kentucky
Franklin, Tennessee
Lovejoy's Station, Georgia
New Market Heights, Virginia
Newtonia, Missouri
Parker's Cross Roads, Tennessee
Port Hudson, Louisiana
Spring Hill, Tennessee
Stephenson's Depot, Virginia



*Above: Stone House,
Manassas, Va.*

*Right: Fort Granger,
Franklin, Tenn.*



A Final Word

A report of this magnitude could not have been written without the generous help of the Civil War Preservation Trust's many friends and partners throughout the country. CWPT wishes to thank the following organizations and individuals for contributing to the *America's Most Endangered Battlefields* report:

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Stones River National Battlefield
Isla Tullos
Wilson West

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Above: *Pennsylvania monument, Cold Harbor National Cemetery, Va.*

Left: *Country lane, Shiloh, Tenn.*



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