Battle of Nashville Historic Sites

Battle Sites

1. Brookmeade Park at Kelley's Point
For two weeks prior to the battle, six artillery pieces under the command of Confederate Lt. Col. D.C. Kelley effectively blockaded the Cumberland River against seven heavily armed U.S. Navy gunboats. The Confederate cavalry and Federal gunboats clashed in six separate engagements. *Brookmeade Park*

2. Granbury's Lunette
This small infantry and artillery fortification was the anchor of the Confederate right flank on December 15th. Named for General Hiram Granbury, who was killed at Franklin, the lunette was the first position assaulted in a diversionary attack just after 8 a.m. by several regiments of United States Colored Troops under Steedman. The USCTs panicked in the attempt and were caught in the railroad cut just below the lunette. The regiments took hundreds of casualties. *Located on Polk Ave.*

3. Confederate Redoubt #1
General Hood placed five redoubts, or heavy entrenchments for cannon, on the hills south of the city to reinforce his left wing. A. P. Stewart's Corps held these positions on December 15th until he was flanked in the late afternoon and forced to retreat to the southeast down Granny White Pike. The remains of these redoubts have been virtually destroyed by development. This redoubt was manned by 120 infantry and a battery of four Napoleon cannon with 85 artillerymen. *Benham Lane near corner of Hillboro Pike and Woodmont Blvd.*

Shy's Hill c. 1890

4. Shy's Hill
This hill, known at the time of the battle as Compton's Hill, was the main point of attack on the left by the Federal Army on the afternoon of December 16th. Throughout the day, the entrenched position was pounded by Federal artillery. Finally, Minnesota regiments under Division Commander John McArthur charged up the steep slope of the hill just after four in the afternoon. This assault began the route of the Army of Tennessee, sending the Southern troops in full retreat across the Granny White Pike toward Franklin Pike. The hill was renamed after the war in honor of Confederate Colonel William Shy, killed defending the hill on the 16th. *At Battery Lane & Benton Smith Road.*

5. Bradford House
Though the house has gone through two reconstructions due to fire since the 1860s, the home's occupant, Mary Bradford, was one of two women (Selene Harding) who tried to rally retreating Confederate troops on December 16th. The house sat between the battle lines. Today, the stone springhouse remains as a testament to the battle. *Lipscomb Dr.*

6. Stewart's Stone Wall
This stone fence originally served as the northern and western boundaries of the 1200-acre Lea plantation. On December 16th, the stacked stone was used as a fortification by Lt. General A.P. Stewart's Corps to hold back the Federal advance. To the taunts of "Remember Franklin" by Stewart's men, elements of Woods IV Corps were held in check throughout most of the day. *On Lealand Lane just south of Battery Lane.*

7. Glen Leven
This Greek Revival house was completed in 1859 by the Thompson family. During the fighting on the 16th, family legend says the back parlor was used by the Federal army as a field hospital and, reportedly, the piano served as an operating table for United States Colored Troops wounded while assaulting Peach Orchard Hill. Dozens of USCTs killed were initially buried on the Thompson plantation, and later removed to the National Cemetery east of town. Today, the home is owned by the Land Trust for Tennessee. *4000 Franklin Road.*

8. Peach Orchard Hill
Entrenched on this hill, Lt. Gen. S.D. Lee's Corps was the far right flank of Hood's Confederate Army. All day on the 16th, Lee's men held this position against attacks by Steedman's Division and Wood's Corps. Six regiments of United States Colored Troops made the attack, the largest use of Black troops at any battle during the war. During the afternoon, USCTs repeatedly attempted to dislodge Lee. One regiment took over 800 casualties in less than an hour. Lee was finally forced to pull back late in the afternoon where he protected the Confederate rear as they retreated toward Franklin. *Corner of Franklin Road & Harding Place.*

Map by Battle of Nashville Preservation Society (www.bonps.org)

Sites may be visited in any order. Please be aware of any sites on private property and obey all property owner warnings.

Fortifications

14. Fort Negley
Anchoring the Union line, the fort was the largest inland masonry fortification constructed during the war, and one of a series of fort installations that surrounded the city. Supporting forts on the hills to the southwest, Casino and Morton, made Nasvhille an impregnable city. All were constructed by impressed Black refugees and slaves from surrounding plantations. The entire field of fire in front of the fort was cleared of trees leaving the landscape bare. On December 15, the guns from these fortifications signaled the Federal assault with an opening salvo. Today, Negley is an historical park with a state-of-the-art Visitor's Center. *Ft Negley Blvd. off 8th Ave. South.*

15. Blockhouse Casino
Blockhouse Casino was built in 1862 as part of the fortification system surrounding the city to the south and the west of town. Made of wood, the blockhouse guarded the Franklin Turnpike. Today, the hill is the site of the city reservoir, built between 1887 and 1889. *8th Ave. South at the city reservoir.*

16. Tennessee State Capitol
Occupied after February 1862 by Federal forces, Nashville was the main supply and transportation hub for the Union armies in the west. The capitol building was completed just prior to the war (1859) and artillery emplacements and cotton bale breastworks surrounded the structure. It was known as Fort Andrew Johnson, after the state's military governor during occupation. Johnson eventually became Lincoln's running mate in 1864 and then president after his assassination several months later. Johnson was present in Nashville during the battle. The building is a National Historic Landmark. *Located on Capitol Hill.*

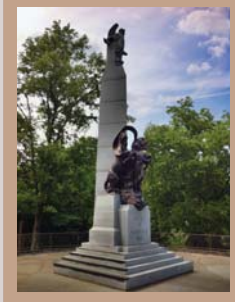
Hospitals

17. Downtown Presbyterian Church
Designed by Philadelphia architect William Strickland, the Egyptian Revival church was completed in 1855. The building served on occasion as a Federal hospital throughout Nashville's occupation. Today, the structure is a National Historic Landmark. *Located at the Corner of 5th Ave. North and Church Street.*

18. Sunnyside
During the first day of the battle, Sunnyside (Sevier House) was in the direct line of fire from both armies. When restoration work was conducted during the 1940s, cannon balls, canisters, and Minie Balls were found embedded in the building. Today, the house serves as the office for the Metro Nashville Historical Commission. *In Sevier Park at Granny White Pike and Kirkwood Ave.*

19. Western Military Institute
In the 1850s, this building was the central hall for the University of Nashville, and was later used to house the school's military institute. Such notable Confederate generals as Bushrod Johnson (buried in the Nashville City Cemetery), Kirby Smith, and A.P. Stewart taught there before the war. Regiments in Steedman's Provisional Division, including two United States Colored Troop brigades, began their march down the Murfreesboro Pike at 6:30 a.m. to make a diversionary attack against the Confederate right at Granbury's Lunette. Today, the structure houses several of the city's government agencies. *800 2nd Ave South.*

Monuments and Magazines



9. Battle of Nashville Peace Monument
Originally dedicated in 1927 to honor men who fought in the Civil War and World War I, the monument was moved in 1999 to this park along the Confederate forward line. This is the only monument on the battlefield that recognizes both Northern and Southern soldiers.

At corner of Granny White Pike & Battlefield Drive.

10. Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
This Gothic Revival church, built in 1852, was used by the Federal army during occupation as a powder magazine. Reportedly, solders chopped meat on the alter and used the baptismal font as a wash basin. After the war, the Federal government compensated the congregation for the damages. *615 6th Ave. South.*

Images courtesy of Tara Mielnik, Metro Historical Commission, David Currey

Headquarters

11. Travellers Rest
Built in 1799 by Judge John Overton, the antebellum plantation home was Confederate General John Bell Hood's army headquarters for the two weeks leading up to the battle. Hood retired from the house and moved across Franklin Pike to Lealand to be closer to the front on December 15th. During the battle on the second day the family hid in the cellar. The Overtons were Confederate supporters, but Federal officers were allowed to stay in the house following the battle to protect the family. *636 Farrell Parkway.*

12. Belmont Mansion
Home of Adelicia Acklen, one of the South's wealthiest women, the 1853 Italianate structure was used by Union Brig. General T. J. Wood as his command post during the battle. From here, Wood's men moved south over Montgomery Hill before turning southeast to engage Confederate redoubt No. 1 along Hillsboro Pike. Family art treasures were removed before fighting broke out, and were taken downtown to the home of former President James K. Polk's widow for safe-keeping. The water tower just south of the mansion was used as an observation post. *1900 Belmont Blvd.*

13. Belle Meade Plantation
Built in 1853 by wealthy planter William Giles Harding, the mansion served as headquarters for Confederate Brig. General James Chalmers, a commander in Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry, for two weeks prior to the battle. On the morning of December 15th, a skirmish took place between Federal and Confederate troops in the front yard. Selene Harding, the 19-year-old daughter of Colonel Harding, ran out of the house during the fighting in an attempt to rally the retreating Confederates. *5025 Harding Road.*

Cemeteries

20. Nashville City Cemetery
Opened in 1822, the cemetery is the city's oldest public burial ground. Originally four acres, the site grew to 27 acres in the decade before the war. During the occupation, the Federal army used the cemetery to bury Federal soldiers who died in the numerous army hospitals in town. Confederates were buried there as well. Among the officers who rest in the cemetery are Confederate Generals Richard Ewell, Felix Zollicoffer, the first Confederate general killed in the western theatre, and "Bushrod" Johnson. *Corner of 4th Ave South and Oak Street.*

21. Nashville National Cemetery
The Nashville National Cemetery was established in 1867 by order of Federal Commander George H. Thomas as a final resting place for Union soldiers killed in and around Nashville during the war. Over 16,000 Civil War soldiers are interred in the cemetery, including 3,600 unknown and members of the United States Colored Regiments who were killed at the Battle of Nashville. *1420 Gallatin Rd.*

22. Mt. Olivet Cemetery
Established in 1855, Mt. Olivet Cemetery became the final resting place for almost 1,500 Confederate soldiers who were reinterred from various battlefield locations in middle Tennessee. Veterans who survived the war were also buried in Mt. Olivet at an area designated as Confederate Circle. Seven Southern generals are interred at the cemetery: William B. Bate, William N. R. Beall, Benjamin F. Cheatham, William H. Jackson, George Maney, James E. Rains, and Thomas Benton Smith. *Located at 1101 Lebanon Rd.*

BATTLE OF NASHVILLE

"So thoroughly was the destruction of Hood's army accomplished that it was deemed unnecessary longer to retain a large force in Tennessee, or indeed anywhere in that section."

Henry Stone, Asst. Adj. Gen.(US)

Onlookers watch the battle from the slopes of Capitol Hill

Battle of Nashville Preservation Society, Inc.

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METRO NASHVILLE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Sunnyside in Sevier Park
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METRO NASHVILLE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

DISCOVER NASHVILLE

BATTLE OF NASHVILLE

Introduction

The Battle of Nashville is considered the last major engagement in the Western Theater during the Civil War. Fought over two days, December 15 and 16, 1864, Federal Major General George H. Thomas engaged the Confederate Army of Tennessee, commanded by General John Bell Hood, in the hills just south of town. In all, Thomas suffered over 2,600 casualties, Hood more than 2,300 killed and wounded, along with 4,500 captured. The overwhelming Union victory sealed the fate of Confederate hopes in the west.

About the Tour

This driving tour includes sites associated with the Federal defenses of Nashville and the first and second days of the battle. All the stops can be reached using public streets. It is easy, especially in the suburban surroundings, to forget the horrors of war. To get the most from this tour, try to imagine the area the way it was in December, 1864—a barren landscape with few trees, ruined farms and plantations, and the bitter cold of winter. The war and Federal occupation by tens of thousands of soldiers left deep scars in the landscape.

When the Confederate Army of Tennessee arrived in Nashville the troops were exhausted. They had been on the march from Atlanta since September, fighting all along the way, including the devastating battle at Franklin on November 30th. Food and firewood were scarce, and Hood's men were poorly outfitted. While the Federal soldiers were better fed and clothed, life in occupied Nashville was not especially pleasant either. With the influx of occupation soldiers and slaves from the countryside, the small town had grown almost overnight into a grossly overcrowded city, now waiting out the dreary years of war. Combat was fierce and personal — often hand-to-hand — and medical care was crude at best. The tour map is accompanied by written directions about the significance of the site. There are also a number of historical markers along the route or nearby. Stopping to read them will enhance the tour.

Federal soldiers below Ft. Morton

Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas

George H. Thomas, nicknamed the "Rock of Chicakmauga," was ordered to Nashville from Atlanta in mid-October of 1864 to defend the city from a possible Confederate campaign to recapture the capitol. One of the Union Army's best field commanders, he was instrumental in Union victories at Shiloh, Stones River, Tullahoma, Chattanooga, and Atlanta. A Virginian, Thomas was disowned by his sisters for not joining the Confederate cause. They even asked him to change his name.

General John Bell Hood

John Bell Hood, a Kentuckian, was a brigade and division commander in the Army of Northern Virginia till he was wounded at Gettysburg and lost the use of his left arm. After recovering he went west when James Longstreet's Corps was detached and sent to Georgia. At Chickamauga he lost his right leg when he was shot just below the hip. He returned to service in mid-1864 with the Army of Tennessee to defend against Sherman's march on Atlanta. President Jefferson Davis replaced Army of Tennessee commander Joseph E. Johnston with Hood in mid-July of 1864.

Occupied Nashville

In mid-February of 1862, Ft. Donelson, located ninety miles northwest of Nashville on the Cumberland River, was captured by the Federal army. The fall of Donelson led directly to the surrender of Nashville on February 25th. Occupation by Federal troops lasted until 1867. During that time, the city was fortified by a series of defensive installations, making Nashville a major supply base of Federal operations in the West. Both men and materials were transported into and through the city to supply the various campaigns to capture the Deep South, including Stones River, Tullahoma, Chattanooga, Atlanta, and Sherman's "March to the Sea." Federal troops also requisitioned numerous churches and hotels to use as hospitals – over twenty in all. With tens of thousands of soldiers garrisoned in Nashville during the war, the areas natural and agricultural resources were depleted, leaving a ravaged landscape for decades after the fighting ended.

Prelude to the Battle

Following a two-month campaign from north Georgia into middle Tennessee and the bloody Battle of Franklin on November 30, 1864, Confederate commander John Bell Hood finally moved his battered Army of Tennessee to the outskirts of Nashville on December 2nd. Hood took up headquarters at Travellers Rest, the home of Col. John Overton. As part of his overall plan, he deployed cavalry units to the west and three infantry corps under Major General Benjamin F. Cheatham, Major General A. P. Stewart, and Lieut. Gen. Stephen D. Lee in a four mile arc that ran from the Nashville & Chattanooga railroad on the right to a series of redoubts along the Hillsboro Pike on the left.

Hood also ordered two cavalry divisions under Maj. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest and Lieut. Gen. William Bate's infantry division thirty miles southeast to destroy parts of the Nashville & Chattanooga railroad and ensure Thomas could not be reinforced by the 8000-man Federal garrison at Fortress Rosecrans in nearby Murfreesboro.

From behind the massive Federal fortifications that ringed the outer limits of the city, including Ft. Negley, the largest inland masonry fort built during the war, Major Gen. Thomas devised a battle plan to make a demonstration against the Confederate right with Maj. Gen. James Steedman's Provisional Division before unleashing a full flank attack against the Confederate left using Maj. Gen. James Wilson's Cavalry Corps, Maj. Gen. A. J. Smith's XVI Infantry Corps, and Brig. Gen. Thomas Wood's IV Infantry Corps. In all, Thomas would send over half of his 58,000-man army crashing against the Confederate redoubts in an attempt to collapse Hood's entire line.

For two weeks, from December 2nd to December 14th, the armies peered at one another across the area between their lines commonly called "no-man's land". At the end of the first week a winter storm produced frigid temperatures near 10 degrees and dropped freezing rain that remained for several days. The weather was so intense that Wilson's 12,000-man cavalry corps was stranded on the east side of the Cumberland River unable to cross the suspension due to ice.

Federal troops on the Nashville battlefield

BATTLE OF NASHVILLE

A Driving Tour of the 1864 Battlefield

CIVIL WAR SESQUICENTENNIAL

Map by Battle of Nashville Preservation Society (www.bonps.org)

The Battle

December 15, 1864

With the ice quickly melting, Thomas finalized his plan and issued orders to his commanders to attack at first light. As the sun rose on the 15th, the city and the battlefield was covered by a dense fog produced by the melting snow. At 8 a.m., Steedman's Division, using four United States Colored Infantry brigades, made several unsuccessful attacks against a lunette defended by Granbury's Brigade of Cheatham's Corp on the Confederate right. The regiments took hundreds of casualties.

At 10 a.m. Wilson's Cavalry and Smith's 12,500-man XVI Infantry Corps began their sweep across the Harding Pike west, south, and then east to engage Stewart's Corps entrenched behind the five redoubts along and near the Hillsboro Pike. They were followed just after noon by Wood's IV Infantry Corps. Smith and Wilson's men captured the heavily outnumbered Redoubt #4, then Redoubt #5. By early afternoon Redoubt #3 fell. Division commanders in Stewart's Corps, realizing they were being flanked, ordered their men to retreat, abandoning Redoubt #2 and #1. Hood moved his entire army back two miles as the sun set on the first day of battle.

December 16, 1864

On the morning of the 16th, fog again covered the battlefield as the Confederates took up a two mile defensive position; anchored on the left by Cheatham's Corps at Compton's Hill (renamed after the war as Shy's Hill in honor of Col. William Shy), and on the right by Lee's Corps at Peach Orchard Hill. In the middle behind a stone wall was Stewart's Corps. Thomas initiated a battle plan that mirrored the first day. With a light rain falling, units from Steedman's Division and Wood's IV Corps began assaulting the Confederate right, taking heavy casualties in the process. One United States Colored Regiment lost five color bearers.

After a delay of several hours due to confusion on the part of Federal commanders, Lt. Gen. John MacArthur of Smith's XVI Corps began an attack from the Federal right against Compton's Hill (Shy's Hill). His Minnesota regiments stormed up the incline around 4 in the afternoon. The Confederates at the top were overwhelmed and began to fall back. Seeing the confusion of troops retreating, Stewart's Corps withdrew hastily in a panic that quickly befell the rest of the army. From atop Peach Orchard Hill, Lieut. Gen. Stephen D. Lee witnessed the debacle and he ordered his men to retreat, acting as the rear guard as the Army of Tennessee moved hastily down the Franklin Pike. As darkness covered the battlefield, Thomas wired Washington on his victory.

The Aftermath

Wilson's Cavalry followed the Confederates into northern Alabama. On the day after Christmas, Hood re-crossed the Tennessee River. The Federal victory at Nashville and Sherman's capture of Savannah, Georgia, solidified the Federal hold on the West. The Army of Tennessee arrived in Tupelo, Mississippi with barely 15,000 men, less than half of the number they entered Tennessee with in November. As Asst. Adj. General Henry Stone of Thomas's staff noted, "By the time of Lee's surrender at Appomattox (April 1865) there remained in Tennessee only the post garrisons and railroad guards needed to protect the property of the United States."