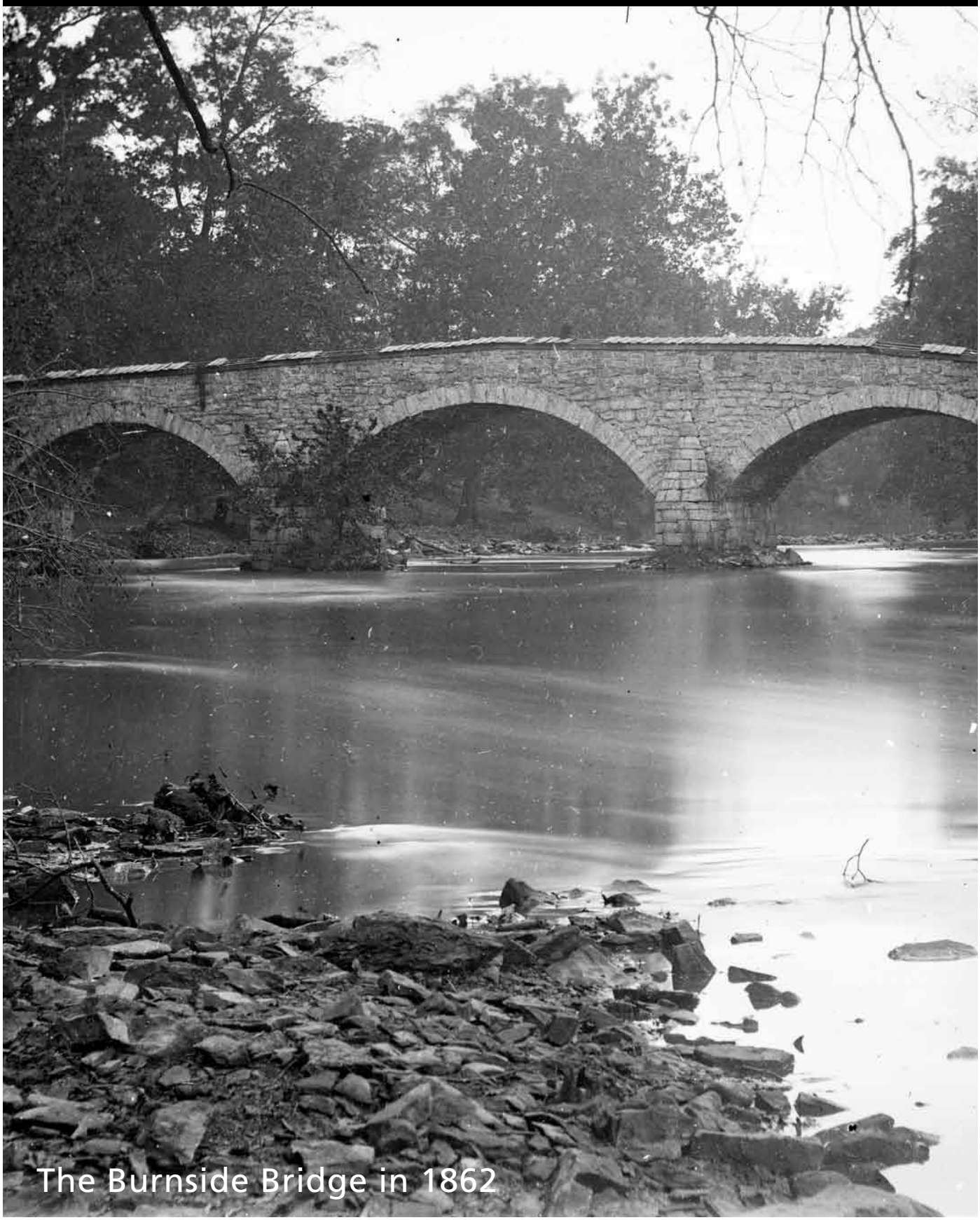
Antietam: People and Places

Antietam National Battlefield
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



The Burnside Bridge in 1862

Procedure

Antietam: People and Places is designed to help educators lead a tour of the Antietam National Battlefield. It is also designed to be used in conjunction with the official Antietam National Battlefield Park Service brochure. While the brochure focuses more on the military strategies and tactics of the campaign and battle, this guide focuses instead on human-interest stories. It tells of local inhabitants and several prominent soldiers who either endured or participated in the battle. There are eleven stops on the Antietam: People and Places tour, each the same as those on the battlefield tour route. At each of these stops, the educator can choose to either read the stories to the students or to designate students to read aloud at each of the eleven stops. Please be sure to review both the park brochure and this guide before beginning your tour. The total tour route is approximately 8.5 miles in length and should take, on average, an hour to an hour and a half to complete.

Introduction

The Battle of Antietam, fought on September 17, 1862, was the bloodiest single day battle in American History with over 23,000 soldiers killed, wounded, or missing. This battle and its aftermath had a profound impact on the men who fought here and the local people who lived in the town of Sharpsburg and on the surrounding farms. Houses, barns, and churches served as temporary hospitals filled with wounded soldiers. Farmers' fields became temporary burial grounds.

As a result of the Union victory at Antietam, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Since the Proclamation only freed slaves in states rebelling against the Union, enslaved people in Maryland would not be freed until 1864 when the State Constitution was rewritten. This guide will help you learn about some of the soldiers and local people affected by the battle.

Today, the battlefield appears much the same as it did in 1862. Preservation efforts started when Civil War veterans returned for reunions and to dedicate monuments in the late 1800's. The National Park service continues these efforts today. Park rangers, preservation workers, and park maintenance employees preserve and protect the battlefield and work to restore it to its historic 1862 appearance. This work could not be accomplished without the help of volunteer groups such as scout troops, history clubs, and school groups who visit the battlefield to learn about the battle and volunteer their time.

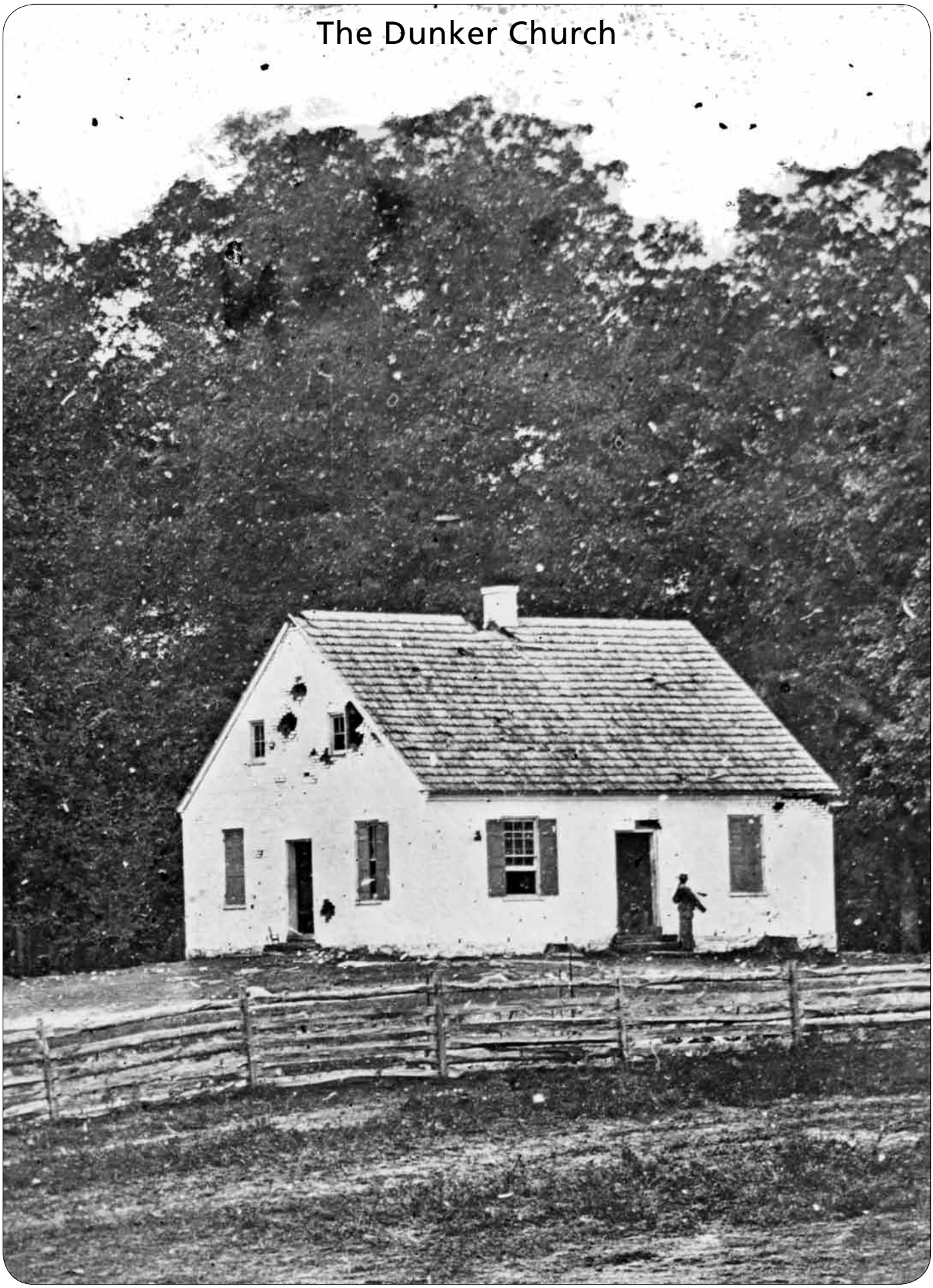
Stop 1: The Dunker Church

The Dunker Church is one of the most famous landmarks on the Antietam Battlefield. During the morning of the battle, this small church was the focal point for many attacks. The irony was that the Dunkers were pacifists; they preached and practiced peace and opposed any kind of violence and warfare. The Dunkers, more formally known as German Baptist Brethren, acquired their nickname "Dunkers" for their practice of full-immersion baptisms, locally in the waters of the Antietam Creek. Still in existence, they are officially known as the Church of the Brethren today. Historically, Dunkers wore plain, dark clothing, and men grew full beards. They lived modest lives and disagreed strongly with slavery.

Immediately following the battle, the Dunker Church was used to shelter and care for the wounded. Eventually services resumed and this building was used until 1899, when the congregations moved to their new church in Sharpsburg. After years of neglect, the Dunker Church crumbled to the ground in 1921 after a fierce wind storm. In 1962, the Dunker Church was rebuilt, using some of the original bricks and floor boards.

Thousands of men were injured and hundreds died on the fields surrounding the Dunker Church, including Charlie King, one of the youngest soldiers to die during the entire Civil War. Charlie King enlisted in 1861 at the age of 12 and served as a drummer boy in the 49th Pennsylvania Infantry. He was generally kept out of harm's way because of his youth, but at Antietam King was struck by a shell fragment. Several of his comrades carried the grievously wounded boy to a field hospital where he would die of his wound three days later. He was only thirteen years old.

The Dunker Church



Stop 2: Clara Barton

The stone monument at this stop was placed here in honor of Clara Barton and in recognition of her heroic actions during the Battle of Antietam. Union Surgeon Dr. James Dunn wrote of Barton, "In my feeble estimation, General McClellan, with all his laurels, sinks into insignificance beside the true heroine of the age, the angel of the battlefield." Arriving near the North Woods at about noon on September 17, Barton watched as surgeons wrapped soldiers' wounds with corn husks, they being completely out of proper bandages. She delivered wagons loaded with bandages and other medical supplies, including lanterns, which enabled the army's medical personnel to work through the night.

As bullets whizzed overhead and artillery boomed in the distance, Barton cradled the heads of suffering soldiers, prepared food, and brought water to the wounded men. As she knelt down to give a wounded man a drink, she felt her sleeve quiver. She noticed a bullet hole in her sleeve and discovered that the bullet killed the man for whom she was caring.

Following the battle, Clara Barton collapsed in exhaustion. She also became ill with typhoid fever. Returning to Washington, she soon regained her strength and later returned to other battlefields where she helped care for the wounded and dying.

Miss Barton's work extended far beyond the fields of battle. At the conclusion of the war, Miss Barton helped establish a National Cemetery at Andersonville, Georgia. This experience launched a nationwide campaign to locate the final resting place for thousands of missing soldiers. In 1870, she traveled to Europe, there Miss Barton learned of the International Association of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies. She returned to the United States and began her most enduring work, the effort to establish the American Association of the International Red Cross.

Clara Barton

Stop 3: General Joseph Mansfield

At age 59, General Joseph Mansfield was one of the oldest generals in the Union army. A West Point graduate and career army man, Mansfield had more than forty years of experience by the outbreak of Civil War. He spent most of his prewar years as an engineer, designing fortifications, improving roadways, and performing other important military and civil tasks. He served with great distinction in the Mexican-American War, being severely wounded and receiving three brevet, or honorary promotions, for gallantry in action. Yet, despite his experience, when the Civil War began, Mansfield found himself assigned to desk and garrison duties, where he was far removed from the action. Wanting to return to the front lines, he lobbied for an active field command for well over a year before, finally, in early September 1862, General George McClellan named Mansfield commander of the Twelfth Army Corps.

The grizzled warrior took command of this unit on September 15, only two days before the Battle of Antietam. Because many of the soldiers in the Twelfth Corps had never before been in battle, Mansfield wanted to make sure they would hold up well during their first fight. Entering the East Woods around 7:30 that morning, Mansfield rode to the front of his lines, personally directing the placement of his regiments. Seeing his men open fire, Mansfield mistakenly believed they were firing into their own men, the retreating soldiers of the Union First Corps. He soon discovered his error; there was a strong line of Confederate infantry advancing. The Confederates opened fire before Mansfield was able to gallop away, suddenly the old fighter slumped from the saddle, shot in the chest, mortally wounded. He died the next day at a field hospital on the George Line Farm, just over one mile to the north. His remains were transported to his native Connecticut for burial. Today, a monument in honor of Mansfield stands at Tour Stop 3, with his Mortuary Cannon, to mark the place where he fell, only a few yards away. Mansfield was the highest ranking of the six generals to give their lives at Antietam.

Gen. Joseph K. F. Mansfield

Stop 4: Johnny Cook

Johnny Cook enlisted as a bugler with Battery B, 4th United States Artillery. During the Battle of Antietam, 15 year-old Johnny served as a messenger. He and the other men in his unit came under heavy fire from Confederate soldiers along the Hagerstown Pike near the infamous Cornfield. When Johnny returned from helping his wounded commander to safety, he discovered that the other men serving on the cannon had been killed. Johnny began to load the cannon by himself until General Gibbon rode by, saw what was happening, jumped off his horse, and began to help the brave young cannoneer. The Confederate soldiers came dangerously close, but Johnny and General Gibbon were able to man the cannon and push them back towards the West Woods.

For his bravery at Antietam, Johnny Cook became one of the youngest soldiers ever to receive the Medal of Honor. His official Medal of Honor citation reads: "Volunteered at the age of 15 years to act as a cannoneer, and as such volunteer served a gun under a terrific fire of the enemy." The Medal of Honor is our Nation's highest recognition for bravery. Johnny went on to serve at Gettysburg and several other battles. After the war, he moved back to his hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio. He died in 1915 and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

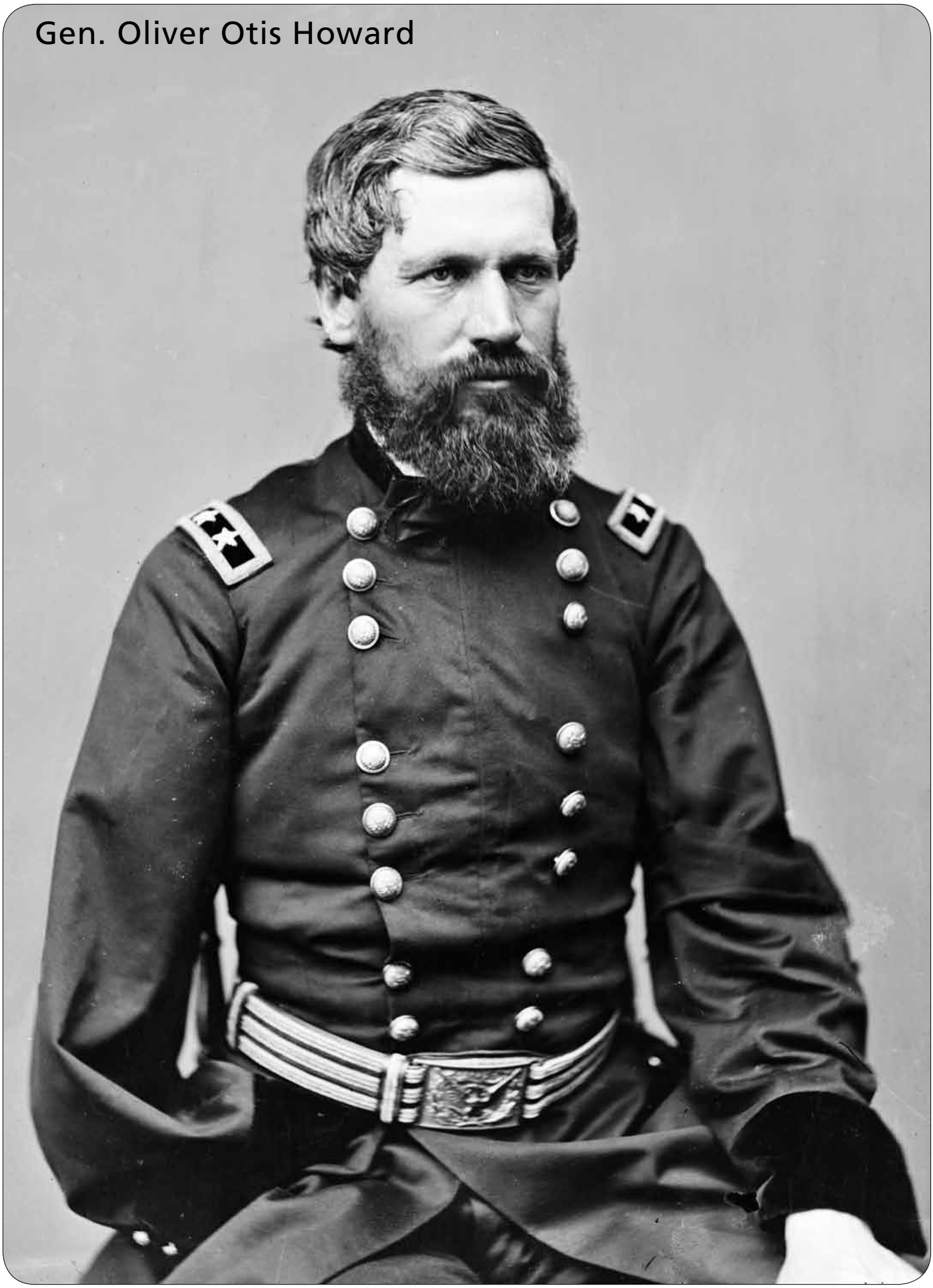
Johnny Cook
and the Medal
of Honor

Stop 5: General O. O. Howard-The One-Armed Abolitionist Warrior

The tall monument you see at Tour Stop 5 is dedicated to the memory of the Philadelphia Brigade, which was composed of the 69th, 71st, 72nd, and 106th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiments. Within less than half an hour of confused and chaotic combat in the West Woods, these regiments lost 93 men killed, 379 wounded, and 73 missing, for a total of 545 casualties. Although these four regiments were recruited from the city of Philadelphia, their brigade commander, General Oliver Otis Howard, was actually a native of Maine. Born in 1830, General Howard, a West Point graduate, was one of the youngest generals of the Civil War. He was a lifelong abolitionist who believed in the immediate emancipation of slaves. Entering the war as the colonel of the 4th Maine Infantry, Howard rose through the ranks all the way to major general. At the battle of Seven Pines on June 1, 1862, Howard was shot in the right arm, which required amputation. When he recovered from this injury, he took command of the Philadelphia Brigade in the Army of the Potomac's Second Corps, which he led with great bravery and distinction at Antietam.

Between 1865 and 1872, Howard served as the commissioner of the Freedman's Bureau, which provided assistance to almost four million Americans released from enslavement. This Bureau issued food and clothing, promoted education, helped freedmen legalize marriages, provided employment, investigated racial confrontations, and worked with Africa-American soldiers and sailors and their heirs to secure back pay and pensions. Oliver Howard founded Howard University, the first African-American Institution of higher education, and Lincoln Technical College in Tennessee. General Howard was a man devoted to freedom and equality, and was willing to fight for his beliefs. In 1893, the United States Congress issued Howard a Medal of Honor in recognition of his bravery at the battle of Seven Pines. Oliver Howard died in 1909.

Gen. Oliver Otis Howard

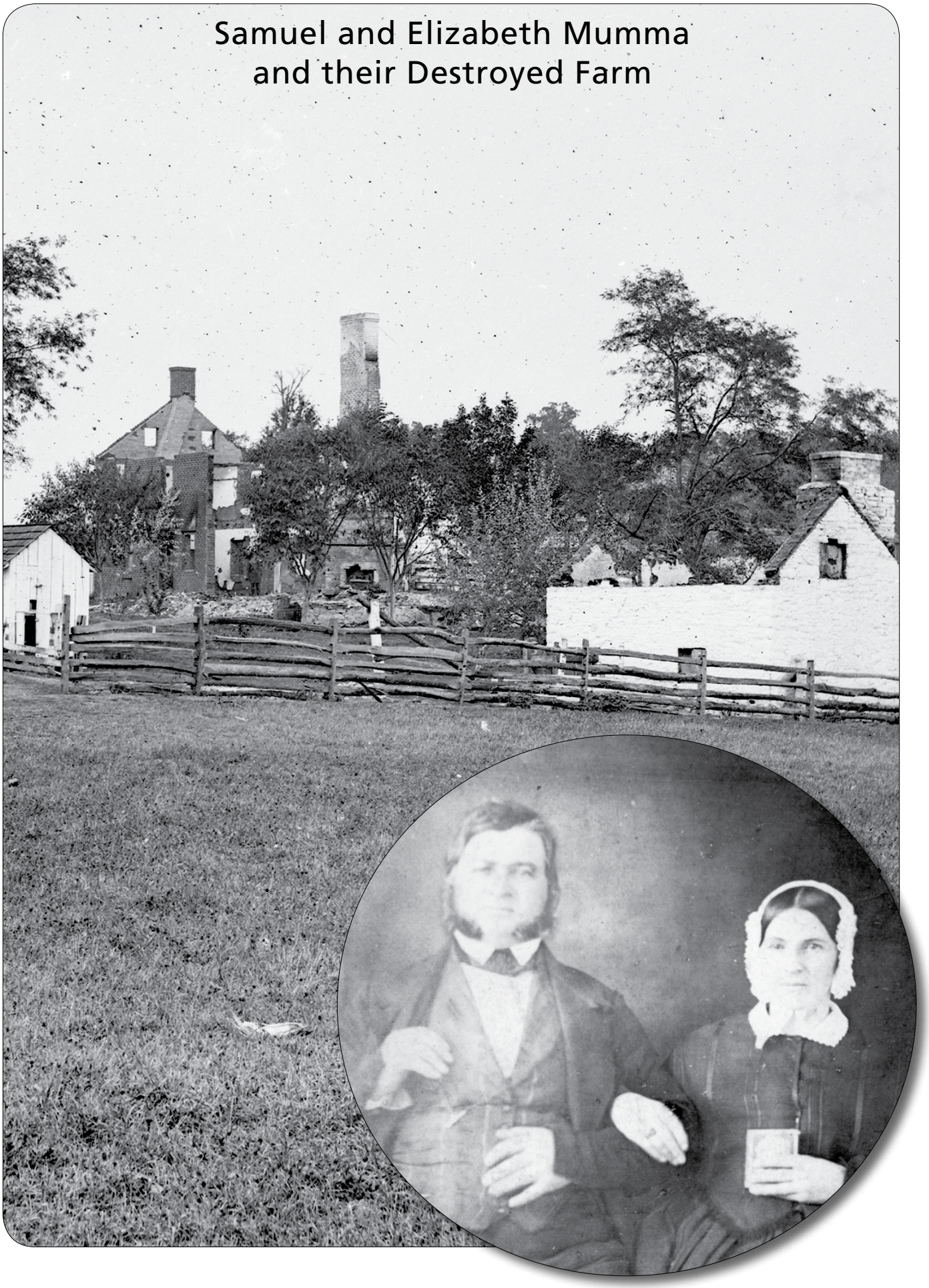


Stop 6: The Mumma Family

Samuel and Elizabeth Mumma and several of their 13 children (some of whom were by Samuel's first wife, Barbara, who died in 1833) lived on this farm in front of you. Also living here in 1862 was a thirteen-year-old boy, Lloyd Wilson. He had been one of two slaves owned by the Mumma Family. Both were manumitted (formally emancipated or freed) in 1856, however Maryland law required freed slaves to stay with their former owners until they reached the age of eighteen. According to Washington County land records of the Mumma household, Lloyd's "freedom [was] to commence on the first day of August, in the year 1869." However, Lloyd would not have to wait that long to become a free man. Although the Emancipation Proclamation did not free slaves in Maryland, since the state was not in rebellion, the state legislature abolished slavery in 1864, meaning that Lloyd, although only fifteen, was no longer bound to the Mumma Family. Although we know that Samuel Mumma owned slaves, the historic record does not tell us why. The relatively short period of ownership and his religious beliefs, however, suggests that he intended to manumit them after purchase.

The family evacuated their home two days before the battle and with other Sharpsburg residents, took refuge in a small church a few miles north. When the Mummas returned home on September 19 they found only the charred remains of their house and barn. They later learned that during the early morning on September 17 Confederate soldiers burned the buildings. This was the only deliberate destruction of civilian property during the battle. The Mummas were left with nothing and never saw compensation for their losses. The following year the Mummas rebuilt their home.

Samuel and Elizabeth Mumma and their Destroyed Farm



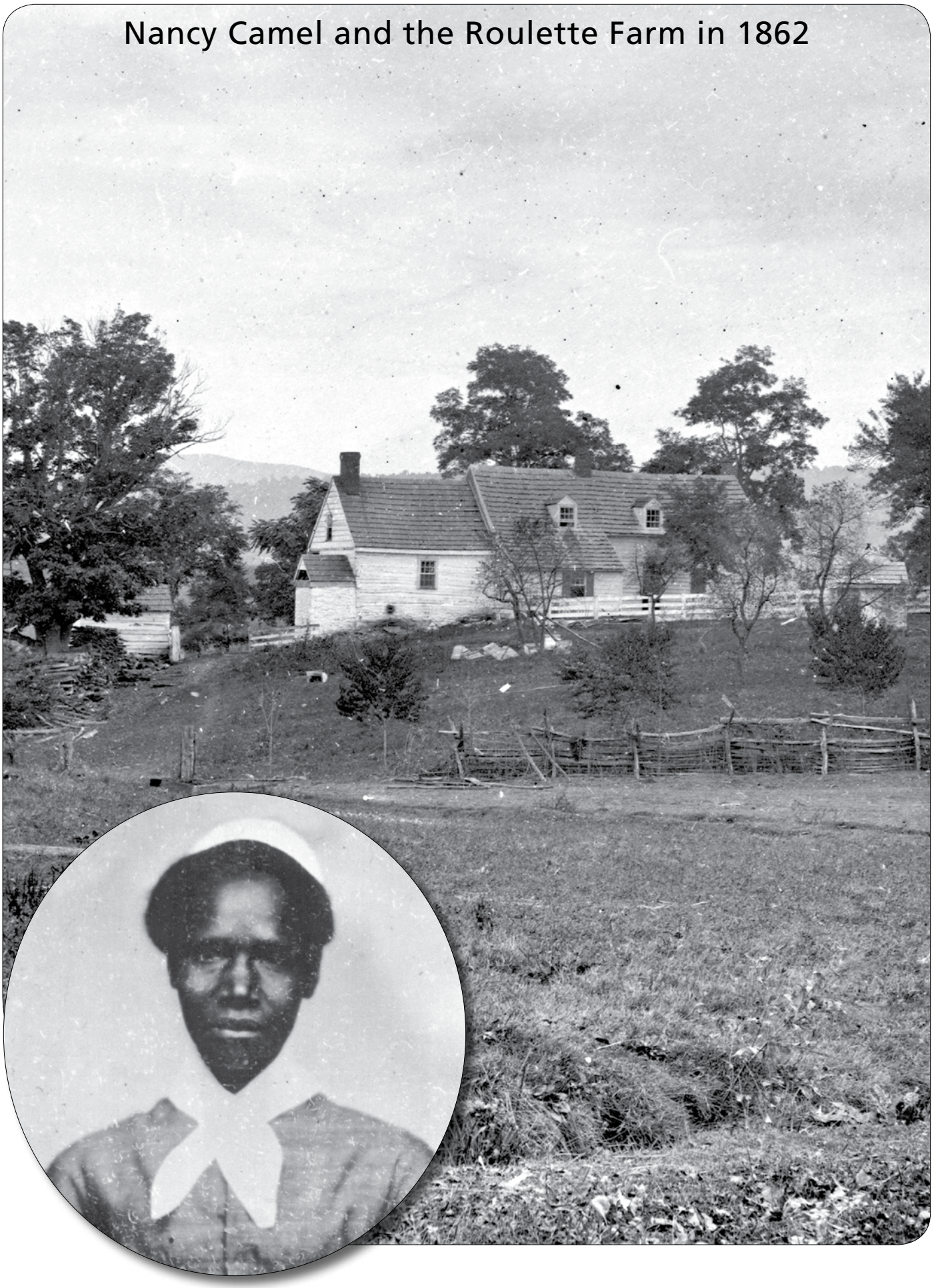
Stop 7: The Roulettes

William and Margaret Roulette lived at this farm with their five children during the battle. The Roulettes did not own slaves, but did employ Nancy Camel, a former slave, as a domestic servant. A young African-American man, Robert Simon age 15, also resided here, working as a farm hand.

After the battle, the Roulette Farm served as a hospital and over 700 dead from the Bloody Lane area were buried on the property. One eyewitness account of the Roulette house damages, by Chaplain Stevens of the 14th Connecticut said "Bullets pierced it on the day of battle, and one huge shell tore through the west side, a little above the floor, and going through the parlor in an upward course passed through the ceiling and a wall beyond and fell harmless amid a heap of rubbish it had created, where we saw it many times that day. During the battle the rooms were stripped of their furnishings and the floors were covered with the blood and dirt and litter of a field hospital…"

More importantly than the damage to the house, a month following the battle, eighteen-month-old Carrie May Roulette died of typhoid fever. Although the Roulettes could reclaim their possessions, they could never replace the loss of their child.

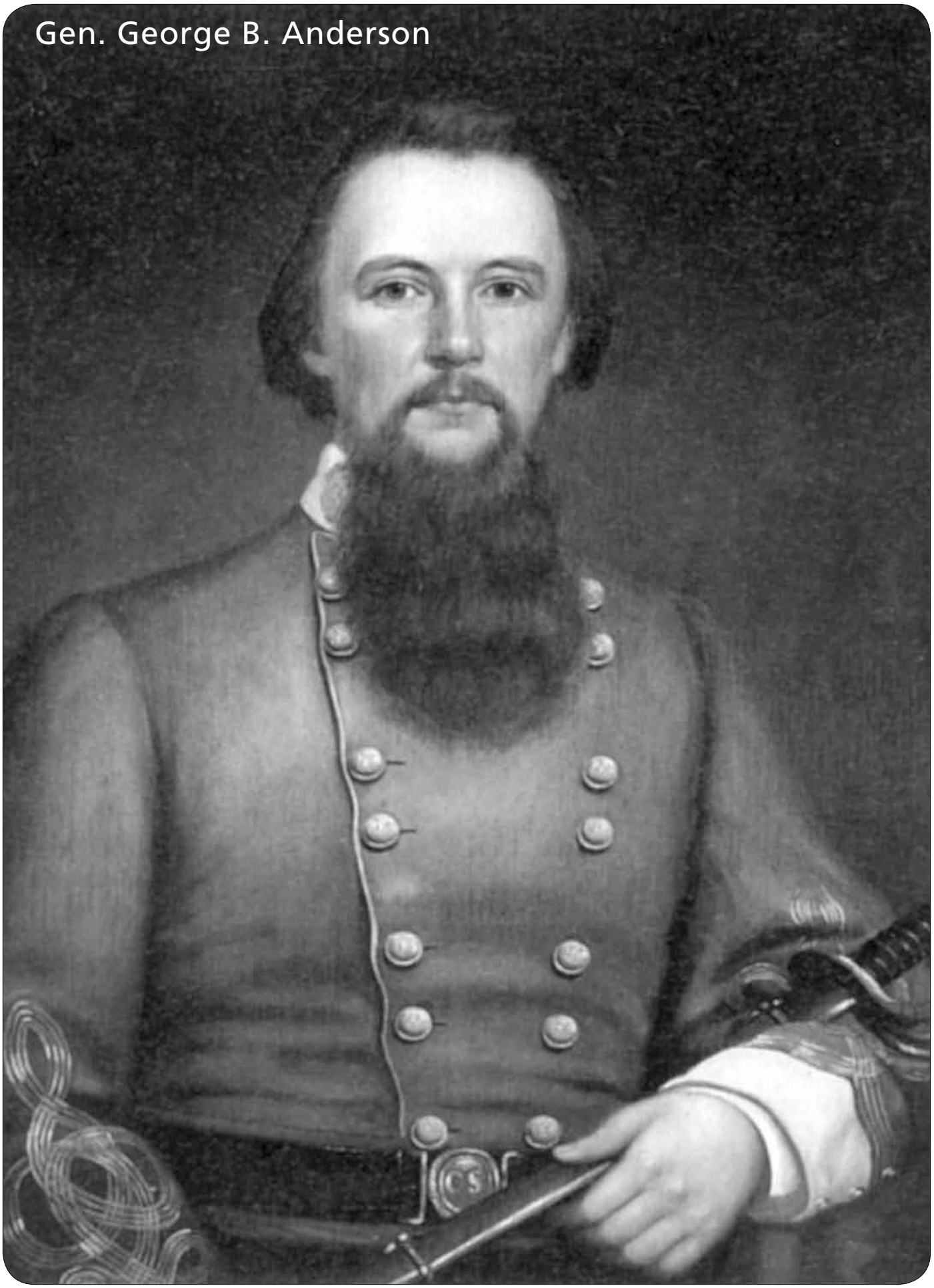
Nancy Camel and the Roulette Farm in 1862



Stop 8: General George B. Anderson

Throughout the morning hours, Confederate soldiers in the Sunken Road listened as the sounds of battle raged to the north. These were veteran soldiers who knew the fighting would surely head in their direction. Soon, the sounds of battle gave way to a more threatening sound: the sound of thousands of Union troops marching directly toward their position, with the drumbeats getting louder and the officers' orders clearly audible. At 9:30 a.m., a wave of Union troops appeared above the crest of the ridge just a few dozen yards to their front. The Confederates greeted them with a wall of musketry.

For the next three hours, a storm of shot and shell filled the air in and around the Sunken Road and casualties mounted quickly. Many Confederate officers fell, including thirty-one-year-old Brigadier General George B. Anderson. A West Point graduate, Anderson was one of the best young generals in the Confederate army. Around 10:00 a.m., Anderson was wounded in the foot. Though a very painful wound, the doctors decided that it was not dangerous and predicted that Anderson would make a full recovery. Placed on a wagon, the wounded Anderson made the long journey back to his home and family in Raleigh, North Carolina. Unfortunately, by the time he arrived , infection had set in and the general's foot had to be amputated. The amputation was performed, but Anderson never recovered. He died of his wound on the morning of October 16, nearly one month after the battle.

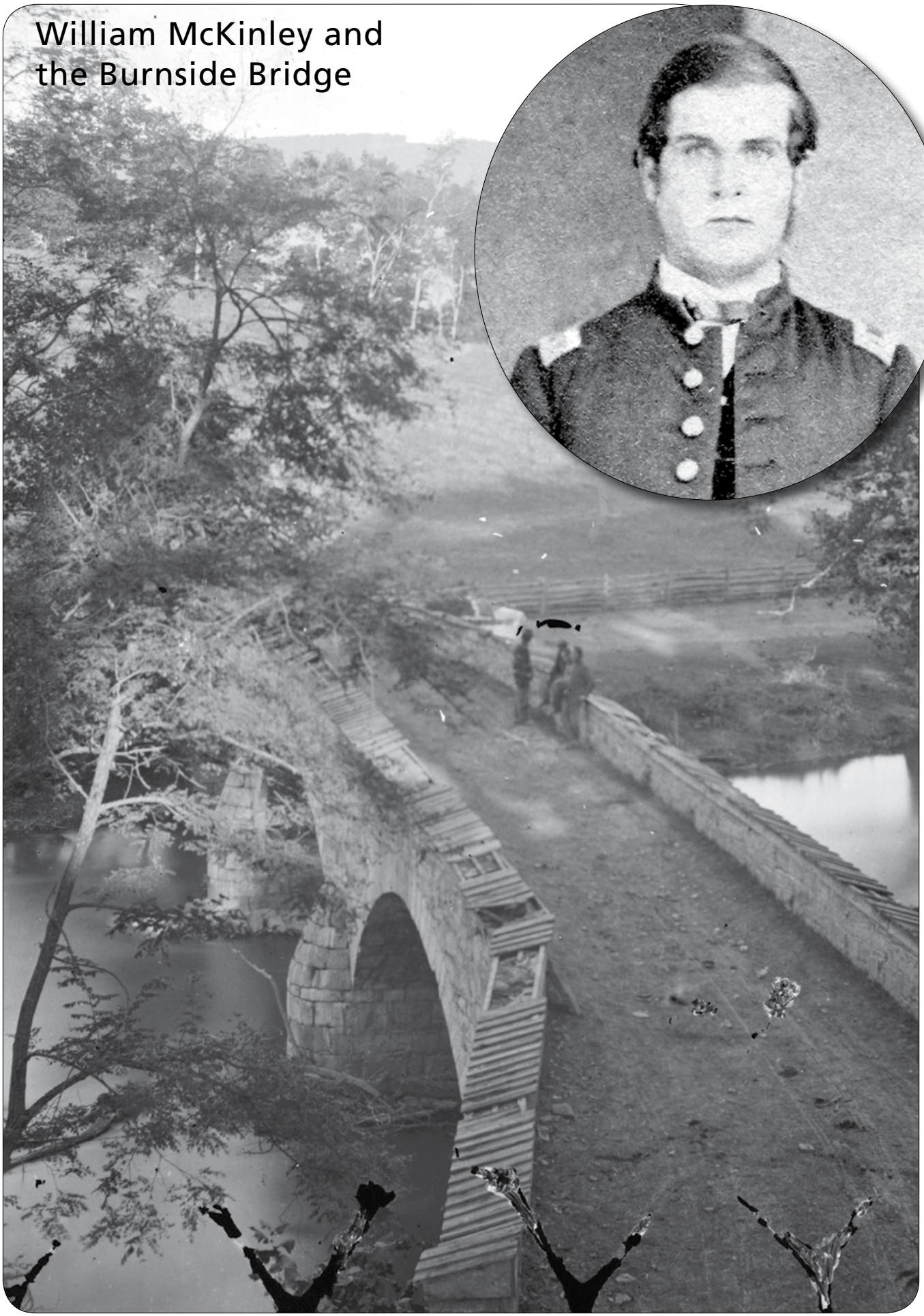

Gen. George B. Anderson

Stop 9: The Burnside Bridge & Sergeant William McKinley

In addition to the Dunker Church and the Sunken Road, the Burnside Bridge is one of the most famous landmarks on the Antietam Battlefield. It was named after Union General Ambrose Burnside, whose 9th Corps troops struggled to gain possession of the bridge on the morning of September 17. Before the battle, the bridge, which was built in 1836, was known as the Rohrbach Bridge, the name of a local farm family. One of the most recognizable figures of the Civil War with his distinctive whiskers—or "sideburns"—Ambrose Burnside faced a very difficult challenge in attacking the bridge, which was defended by both Confederate infantry and artillery. It took several attempts, but Burnside's men were able to carry the bridge at around 12:45 that afternoon, at a cost of 500 men killed or wounded.

One of the soldiers who fought in Burnside's 9th Corps was nineteen-year-old William McKinley. He served as a Commissary Sergeant in the 23rd Ohio; it was his job to make sure the troops were fed. Commissary Sergeant McKinley served with great distinction in the war. Thirty four years later, McKinley was elected President of the United States. He was reelected in 1900 but, one year later, he was assassinated. Following his death, the McKinley monument was placed near the bridge to pay tribute to the old Civil War veteran who survived the war, only to be gunned down by an assassin's bullet. Interestingly enough, McKinley's Civil War commander was none other than Colonel Rutherford B. Hayes, who was also elected president in the years following the war. Because two future presidents came from this one regiment, the 23rd Ohio is best known today as "The President's Regiment."

William McKinley and the Burnside Bridge



Stop 10: General Isaac Peace Rodman

Most of the generals who served at Antietam were career soldiers with many years of experience. In fact, more than 90% were graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point. But there were a few who were not trained or educated as military officers. One of the most prominent of these non-professional soldiers was Isaac Peace Rodman, a native of Rhode Island. Rodman was a merchant and state politician. When the Civil War commenced in April 1861, forty-year-old Rodman volunteered to fight. Since he was such a well-known member of his community, he was elected as a captain in the 2nd Rhode Island Volunteer Infantry. During the first year of the war, Rodman proved himself to be a great leader and a very brave officer who was never afraid to lead from the front. His superiors, including General Ambrose Burnside, recognized Rodman's skills and talents and he rose steadily through the ranks.

By September 1862, Rodman was a division commander in Burnside's 9th Army Corps. His men were the first Union troops to cross the Antietam Creek on the southern portion of the battlefield when they waded Snavely's Ford around noon. Later that afternoon, Rodman's men drove Confederate troops from the high ground to your right. Rodman was leading his men to the streets of Sharpsburg and stood on the verge of achieving a crushing victory when disaster struck on his exposed left flank.

A.P. Hill's Confederates arrived from Harpers Ferry, after a seventeen-mile-trek up the Potomac, just in time to turn back Rodman's attack. During the chaotic fighting that ensued, Rodman was shot in the chest and fell from his horse. He was carried to the rear, but the wound proved mortal. Isaac Peace Rodman died on September 30, less than two weeks after the battle. He was one of the six generals to give his life at Antietam, and the spot where he fell is marked by a mortuary cannon at the base of the tall monument on the high ground to the west.

Gen. Isaac P. Rodman

Stop 11: The Antietam National Cemetery & "Old Simon"

Dedicated on September 17, 1867, the five-year anniversary of the battle, the Antietam National Cemetery contains the remains of more 4,700 Union soldiers who were either killed or mortally wounded at the battles of Antietam, South Mountain, Monocacy, and other actions in Maryland. In addition, there are more than 200 non-Civil War burials mostly veterans and their spouses from World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. The National Cemetery was closed in 1953 due to space limitations. Toward the rear right wall are several graves of African-American veterans from the World Wars. Their segregated graves serve as a reminder of the days before the integration of troops and illustrate the discrimination African-Americans faced even in death.

The colossal structure of granite standing in the center of the cemetery reaches skyward 44 feet-7 inches, weighs 250 tons, and is made up of 27 pieces. The statue depicts a Union infantryman facing north, toward his home. The "Private Soldier" first stood at the gateway of the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, PA, in 1876. It was disassembled again for the long journey to Sharpsburg. On September 17, 1880, the statue was finally in place where it was formally dedicated. The journey of "Old Simon," as he is known locally, had been delayed for several months when the section from the waist up fell into the river at Washington, D.C. When retrieved, it was transported on the C&O Canal, and dragged by using huge, wooden rollers through Sharpsburg to the cemetery. The inscription on the monument reads, "Not for themselves, but for their country."

Antietam National Cemetery