

Tracing the Civil War

The American Civil War along the Natchez Trace: Mississippi



Brice's Crossroads Battlefield: A Brief Field Trip Guide

The purpose of this essay is to give the teacher an outline of a few stopping points and places of interest to enhance a trip to the Brice's Crossroads Battlefield.

The battlefield is located approximately 3 miles west of the intersection of Mississippi Highways 45 and 370. As you exit 45 and proceed westward, explain to the students that they are traveling the same route Forrest's cavalry traveled that morning in 1864.

Stop 1a (optional) As you enter the site you will notice a stone tablet on the right which commemorates the open shots of the battle. Here Forrest's scouts skirmished with Federal scouts who gave ground westward towards the battlefield. If you chose to pull over here, point out the treeline and explain that Forrest used the treeline and forests to disguise and conceal his army as they approached the Union position.



Stop 1 Continuing west, you will come to a large pull over on the left. This provides a good view of large part of the battlefield and is a good place to get oriented. Across the road to your northwest is Brice's Crossroads.



The National Park Service maintains the one acre site that contains the iconic monument. It stands approximately where the Brice house stood.



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Across the road from the monument is Bethany Presbyterian Church. The original church was across the road adjacent to the Bethany Historic Cemetery.



The field next to you now was part of the Union battle line. The line stretched from south and west beyond where Bethany Church is located, across this field, and northward beyond the Historic Cemetery. (Do not let the paved walking path deceive you. Some mistake this as marking the line of battle. It does not. The lines ran from south to north not west to east as the path seems to suggest.) Explain to the students that as the battle progressed, the Union line began to bend and formed a large semicircle around the crossroads.



Stop 2 At this time, either drive or walk over to the monument site and explore the monument, cannon and cemetery. If walking, use extreme caution! These roads can be very busy and traffic is frequent.

The Confederate Cemetery is located north of the old Bethany Cemetery. Again proceed with caution and urge students to be respectful. The old cemetery is in some disrepair and should be walked with care so as to do no further damage. Explain to students that this site is actually the site of a mass grave of Confederate soldiers killed at Brice's Crossroads. The markers bear the names and units of 110 of the soldiers.



Stop 3 Before leaving the monument site, take time to explain how the Union line finally gave way and began to retreat north. Turn right at the crossroads and proceed north to the Tishomingo Creek Overlook (Log Cabin Hill) on the right approximately .3 miles. Turn in and park here. There are a number of information placards here. The teacher should point out Tishomingo Creek just north and below the hill and remind the students of the difficulty crossing due to the flooded conditions. Point out the adjacent fields where the Federal baggage train became



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bogged down. On this hill and this area is where the Union rear guard, particularly the U.S. Colored Troops fought so hard to delay the Confederate advance.

Stop 4 Re-embarking here you can make short drive down the hill and to the right to the site of the Tishomingo Creek Bridge. Take a right here and park.

Explain to students here is where the crossing became choked with retreating soldiers, wagons and cannon. Several information placards are available for students to explore.



It is hoped that this information will give the teacher some ideas about bringing a class to Brice's Crossroads. While this is not an exhaustive tour, it should provide an overview and students should gain some appreciation of the conditions and terrain, and gain a better perspective on the battle.