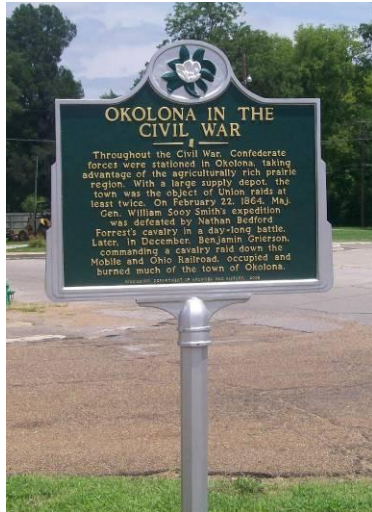


Tracing the Civil War

The American Civil War along the Natchez Trace: Mississippi



The Battle of Okolona: A Brief Field Trip Guide

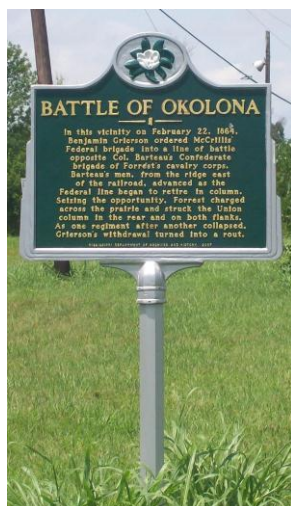
The purpose of this essay is to give the teacher an outline of a few stopping points and places of interest to enhance a trip to Civil War sites in and near Okolona. Teachers wishing to visit the Natchez Trace Parkway should contact the headquarters. To contact the park, please call the Natchez Trace Parkway Visitor Center at 1-800-305-7417. The Visitor Center is open everyday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Central Time) except Dec. 25. To contact the park's headquarters, call 662-680-4025 during regular business hours, Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Central Time). Rangers are sometimes available to accompany trips.

To reach Okolona from the Natchez Trace Parkway, exit the Parkway near mile marker 239 onto Highway 32; turn right and travel east on Highway 32. Travel 9.6 miles to the intersection of Highways 32 and 245. Turn left onto Highway 245 and take the first right onto Main Street. The Civil War monument will be straight ahead.

Stop 1: The Confederate Monument

Explain to students that the monument was erected in 1905 to much fanfare and celebration. The teacher can explain that as they travel through this area many of the structures they see are very old and several were there during the Civil War. The nearby marker gives a nice summary of Civil War era Okolona. Just a few blocks east of the monument is the railroad that was so important to both sides during the war.

Re-embark and travel back down Main Street and return to Highway 245. Turn right and travel north until you see two large brick columns on the left. Park here.



Stop 2: The Battle of Okolona

The columns mark the entry to the old Okolona College. The information marker is a short walk away. Use extra caution near the highway. Explain to students that this marker is near the spot where the Confederates struck the Union troops and sent them retreating toward Pontotoc. Point out the fields and note that the Confederates came from the direction of Okolona and they are standing near where the Federal line was.

Tracing the Civil War

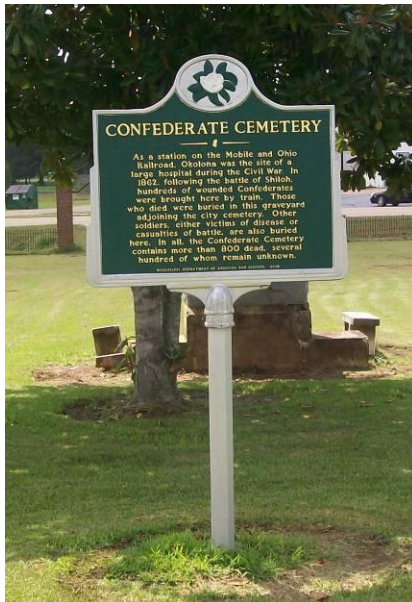
The American Civil War along the Natchez Trace: Mississippi



Re-embark, get back onto Highway 245 and travel back towards Okolona 1.3 miles to the Confederate Cemetery. It will be on your left. Along the way, pause a moment to see Beauwood.

Stop 2a: Elliot/Donaldson House, Beauwood

Just past Okolona High School and on your right will be a Dollar General. If you wish you can park here and walk next door to the yard of the mansion. Or simply have the driver slow down as you near the mansion. Explain to students that this mansion (currently being restored) was where the body of General Forrest's brother Jeffrey was brought after the battle. He remained here until funeral arrangements could be made. Also explain that when General Forrest was wounded later that year at the Battle of Tupelo, he was brought to this house to recover.



Stop 3: The Okolona Confederate Cemetery

Explain to students that more than 1000 Confederate soldiers from several states are buried here making it one of the largest cemeteries of its type in the state. Please ask that students maintain the respect and dignity expected in any cemetery.

Re-embark, turn right onto Highway 245 and travel to the intersection of 245 and Highway 32. Turn left onto 32 and travel west about .1 mile and turn right onto Highway 41. Travel north about six miles to the next information marker on your right.

As you travel, explain to students that they are on what was called the Pontotoc Road. This is the route taken by the Union troops as they retreated and were pursued by the Confederates. Pull over just beyond the marker.



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Stop 4: Prairie Mount

Explain that it was in this area that the Union troops formed lines of battle to stop the Confederate pursuit. Fighting raged here as the Confederates attacked time and again. It was in one those attacks that Colonel Jeffrey Forrest was killed.

Re-embark and continue travel north on Highway 41 until you reach the Natchez Trace Parkway. Continue under the underpass another mile and look for 2 historic markers on your right. Pull over here.

Stop 5: Union Grave Site

The markers are part of the Pontotoc Historic Tour, stops 12 and 27. On the hill above the markers are the graves of 11 unknown Union soldiers. Explain that these graves lie very near Old Pontotoc Road.

Explain that just a mile further north, the Union attempted one final stand. This effort was unsuccessful and the Union resumed their rapid retreat north.

Re-embark and return south and re-enter the Natchez Trace Parkway.



This tour, while not exhaustive, is intended to give the teacher places of interest that will help students gain a greater appreciation for the events of the Battle of Okolona.