

# Stones River

Stones River National Battlefield  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## The Battle of Stones River 150th Anniversary



# Stones River: A Hard Earned Union Victory



On the last day of 1862, the struggle for control of the Confederate heartland took a bloody turn near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. More than 81,000 soldiers savaged each other for three days leaving nearly 24,000 dead, wounded, or captured. At battle's end, a battered Union army held the field and claimed in President Abraham Lincoln's words, "a hard-earned victory, which, had there been a defeat instead, the nation could scarcely have lived over."

## Shifting Tides in Tennessee



When the Union Army of the Cumberland, commanded by Gen. William S. Rosecrans, marched out of Nashville on December 26, 1862, it carried Federal hopes for a victory that would restart the Union drive into the heart of the Confederacy.



Gen. Braxton Bragg and his Army of Tennessee hoped to control middle Tennessee and protect Chattanooga. They hoped to destroy the Union army and reclaim Nashville from the invaders.

## Holiday Highs and Lows In Confederate Murfreesboro 1862

Despite the difficulty of supporting 38,000 soldiers, many people in Murfreesboro celebrated the return of hundreds of their sons. Confederate President Jefferson Davis visited the town with promises of victory on the horizon. News of the approaching Union army dampened citizens' holiday spirit as they realized their town was about to be in the middle of the maelstrom. Only the area's enslaved people remained upbeat, sensing their chance for freedom had arrived.



## A Bloody Fight: December 31, 1862 - January 2, 1863



The Confederates started the fight with a dawn attack that crushed the right end of the Union line. Deadly fighting raged in places called the Slaughter Pen and Hell's Half Acre as Union resistance stiffened throughout the day. Massed artillery along the Nashville Pike halted the Confederate tide as the sun set on the last day of 1862. The armies reorganized and repositioned themselves on New Year's Day. The battle resumed January 2, 1863 with a Confederate charge that was crushed in a hail of destruction from fifty-seven Union cannons.

## The Beginning of the End



The Confederate withdrawal on January 3, 1863 left Murfreesboro at the mercy of the Union army. News of the victory bolstered northern morale and added muscle to the Emancipation Proclamation. Union soldiers and formerly enslaved people built Fortress Rosecrans to protect supplies for the coming campaigns that ended with Sherman's March to the Sea.

# 150th Anniversary Programs



**Wednesday-Friday December 26-28, 2012**

All programs begin at the park visitor center.

**10 AM - *The Approaching Thunder*** - Join a ranger for a talk that focuses on the events of the Stones River Campaign 150 years ago to the day. **30 minute talk**

**11 AM - *Battlefield Walk*** - Join a ranger for a walk through a different section of the battlefield each day. **60 minute walk**

**1 PM - *Stones River Stories*** - Listen as a ranger shares the story of a soldier or group of soldiers that fought in the Battle of Stones River. **30 minute talk**

**2 PM - *Battlefield Caravan Tour*** - Visitors will follow a ranger in their vehicles and stop at four sites to learn about the events and people that are part of the story of the Battle of Stones River. **90 minute tour**

**3 PM - *Living Under the Guns*** - Discover how the Battle of Stones River changed the lives of civilians. **30 minute talk**

**Saturday and Sunday December 29-30, 2012**

## Camp Programs Near Visitor Center

While you wait for the next hourly program to begin, join soldiers and civilians in the interpretive camp and discover stories from beyond the battlefield. Presentations will include Signal Corps, Artificers, camp games, Provost Marshal, and the civilian story of Holly McFadden. The camp will be open from 9 AM to 4 PM daily.

## Family Activities Near Visitor Center

Young visitors can gather at the Family Fun Tent from 9 AM to 4 PM each day and complete activities to earn a special 150th anniversary Junior Ranger badge.



**Saturday and Sunday December 29-30, 2012**

All programs will last 30 minutes and begin at the park visitor center.

**9 AM - *The Approaching Thunder*** - Join a ranger for a talk that describes the events of the Stones River Campaign 150 years ago to the day.



**10 AM - *Rising Tide*** - Learn how the Confederates shattered the Union right flank during the morning of December 31, 1862. **Musket Firing Program**

**11 AM - *Resisting the Tide*** - A ranger will recount the harrowing fight in the Slaughter Pen where Union forces bought time for their comrades to build a new defensive line. **Musket Firing Program**

**12 PM - *Covering the Retreat*** - Watch cannons fire and learn how Union artillery struggled to hold back the Confederate tide with mixed results. **Cannon Firing Program**

**1 PM - *Hell's Half Acre*** - A ranger will recount the bloody struggle of Confederate infantry as they attacked the Round Forest. **Musket Firing Program**

**2 PM - *Fighting for the Pike*** - A ranger will tell visitors how Union infantry made its final stand at the Nashville Pike on December 31, 1862. **Musket Firing Program**

**3 PM - *Artillery Saves the Days*** - Visitors will appreciate the critical role of cannons in forging the Union victory. **Cannon Firing Program**



**4 PM - *A Hard Earned Victory*** - Join a ranger for a discussion of the important military, political and social impacts of the costly Union victory at Stones River.

# 150th Anniversary Programs

**Monday December 31, 2012**

**9 AM - *The Line That Wouldn't Break*** - Join a ranger for a walk along the Union line that halted the Confederate tide at the Nashville Pike. **60 minute walk**



**Book Signings** - Historians Michael Bradley, Shirley Jones, and Chris Kolakowski will sign copies of their books about the Civil War in Tennessee from 10 AM to 3 PM in the park visitor center. Each author will also present a **30 minute talk**.

**11:30 AM - *The Battle of Stones River*** - Chris Kolakowski

**1:30 PM - *Murfreesboro in the Civil War*** - Shirley Jones

**2:30 PM - *The Tullahoma Campaign*** - Michael Bradley

## *Voices of Stones River*

Tour the battlefield and find living history programs at Tour Stop 2 and the visitor center featuring descriptions of the Battle of Stones River as written by the soldiers who were lucky enough to survive the carnage. **Thirty-minute programs will be offered hourly at each location from 10 AM through 3 PM. Artillery demonstrations at the visitor center and musket demonstrations at Tour Stop 2.**

**4 PM - *A Hard Earned Victory*** - Join a ranger for a discussion of the important military, political and social impacts of the costly Union victory at Stones River. **30 minute talk**

**Tuesday January 1, 2013**

**All programs begin at the park visitor center.**

**10 AM - *The Eye of the Storm*** - Learn about the quiet but critical events of New Year's Day that shaped the outcome of the battle. **30 minute talk**

**11 AM - *Digging In*** - Walk around the earthworks built by the Pioneer Brigade and discuss how the use of field fortifications changed the course of the battle. **60 minute walk**

**1 PM - *Mr. Lincoln's Proclamation*** - President Abraham Lincoln will share his thoughts on creating the Emancipation Proclamation and how it changed the Civil War and the nation. **30 minute talk**



**2 PM - *Expressions of Freedom*** - Students from McGavock High School will share the videos they created for the National Park Foundation's *Expressions of Freedom* contest. **60 minutes**

**3 PM - *Mr. Lincoln's Proclamation*** - See description above.

**Wednesday January 2, 2013**

**All programs will last 30 minutes and begin at the park visitor center.**

## *"The Very Forest Seemed to Fall"*

See and feel the power of Union artillery and experience the battle's bloody climax through the stories of the cannoneers who stopped Breckinridge's charge.

Programs at 10 & 11 AM, 1, 2, 3 & 4 PM