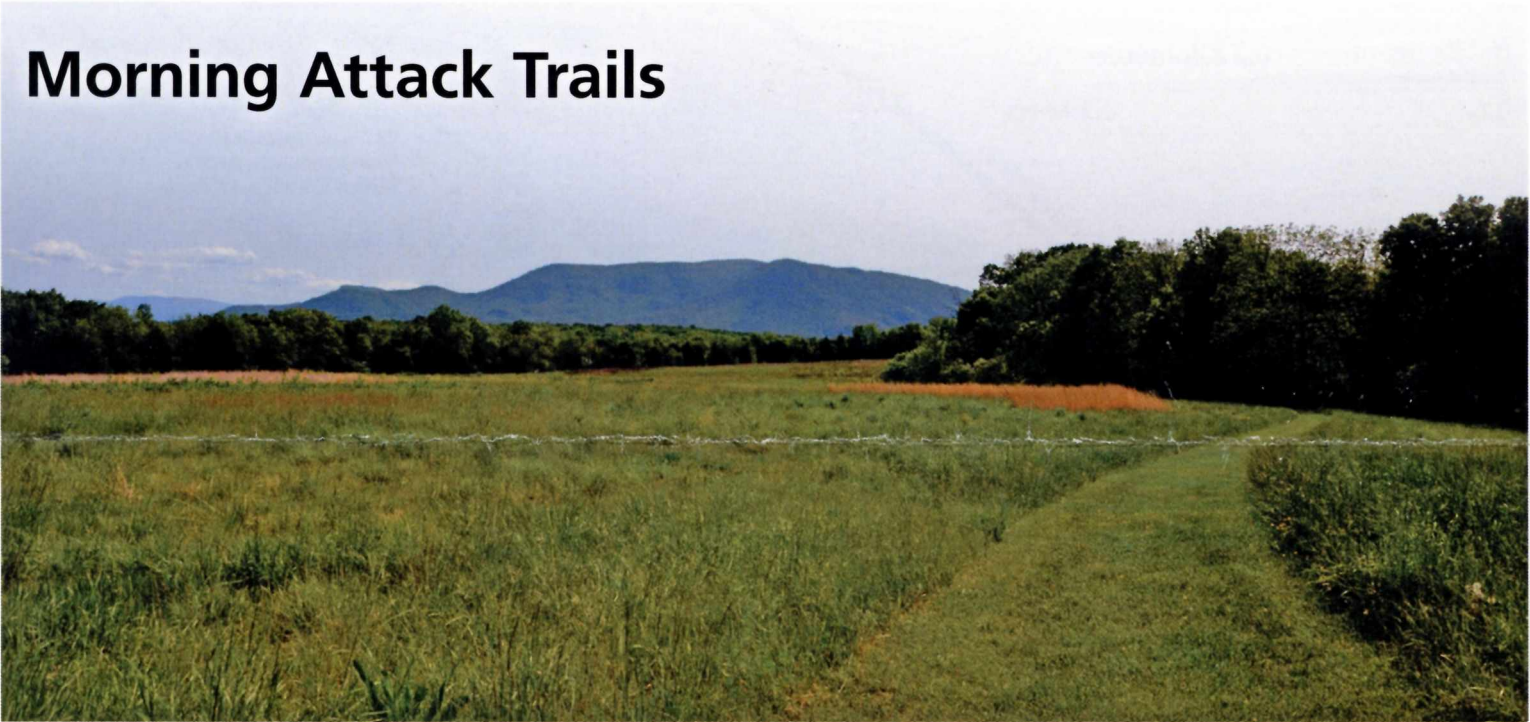




NPS PHOTO, 2023

The Morning Attack Trails are three connected trails through a battleground. Confederates attacked on the morning of October 19, 1864, during the Battle of Cedar Creek. Gen. Jubal Early’s Army of the Valley swarmed into the Federal camps along the bluffs above Cedar Creek. Surprised Federals made a heroic stand but failed. The Confederate assault soon drove them out of their camps and north of Middletown.

Walk the Morning Attack Trails

Follow the Morning Attack Trails to places where soldiers fought during the early hours of the Battle of Cedar Creek on October 19, 1864. The three trails combined are 1.5 miles long. They are on national park land. Set aside at least 30 minutes to walk the trails.

Mobile App

This tour is also featured on the NPS App, which is available for iOS- and Android-powered devices. Download the app for free through the App Store and Google Play.

Trail Rules & Safety

The Morning Attack Trails are open from dawn to dusk. Keep dogs on leashes. Do not use metal detectors. Beware of ticks.

Get Started

Park at the trail entrance, 8739 Valley Pike. The trail is downhill from the parking area, at the gap in the wood line.

Self-guiding Tour

Trail Parking & Entrance (Stop 1)

Before dawn on October 19, Confederate troops launched a surprise attack. They crossed Cedar Creek to the south and routed Col. Joseph Thoburn’s Federal division. Then the Confederates advanced on the rest of the US 8th Corps in these fields.

Thomas’s Approach Route (Stop 2)

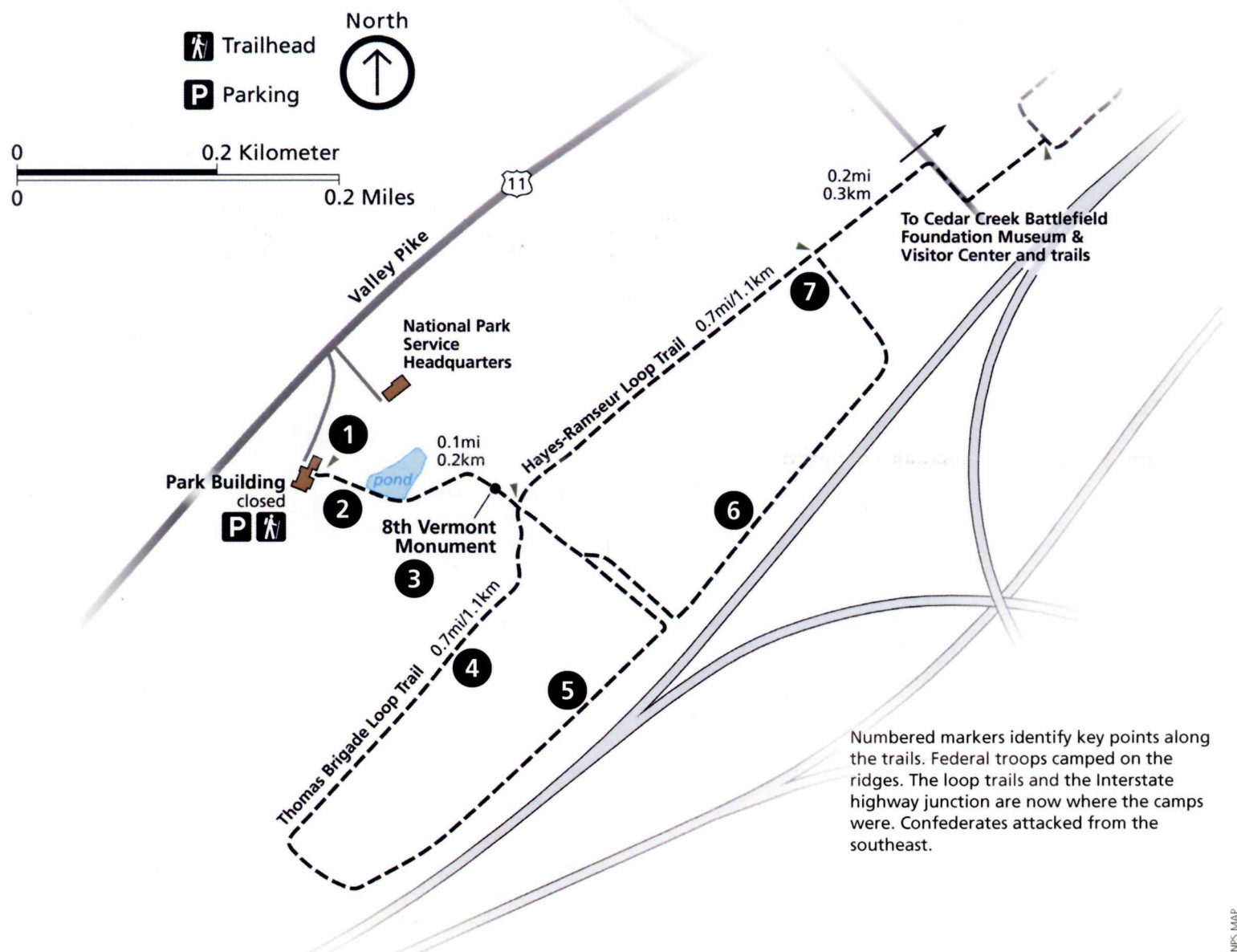
From his camp west of the Valley Turnpike, US Gen. William Emory heard the pre-dawn surprise attack. To give the other US troops time to respond, Emory ordered Col. Stephen Thomas’s brigade towards the fighting. The trail follows the route Thomas’s brigade took through the ravine.

8th Vermont Monument (Stop 3)

The 8th Vermont retreated from here after desperate hand-to-hand fighting. Surviving veterans returned twenty years after the war ended. They put up a marble monument where the 8th Vermont’s sacrificial stand slowed the Confederate attack.

Thomas’s Right (Stop 4)

Thomas’s brigade made a line along this ridge from the present monument. The line started with the 8th Vermont on the brigade’s left. The 47th Pennsylvania was at about this place on the right. The 160th New York and 12th Connecticut lined up between. One by one, these regiments fell to the Confederates on their right. The 8th Vermont retreated last.



Stops (Continued)

Gordon's Approach (Stop 5)

Confederate soldiers led by Gen. John B. Gordon advanced across the field from the south and east. They included veterans of the famous "Stonewall Brigade" from the Shenandoah Valley. Rolling terrain, heavy fog, and early morning sunlight hid their advance from the Federals. They fought Thomas's brigade in this field.

Hayes's Camp (Stop 6)

In early October, troops of the US 8th Corps under Col. Rutherford B. Hayes camped along this ridge. The army often woke up early and scouted for the enemy. They also spent much time lounging in camp and reading mail from home. Ohio soldiers came to the camp to cast absentee votes in the 1864 election.

Hayes's & Kitching's Lines (Stop 7)

With their camps overrun, Hayes's and Col. J. Howard Kitching's Federals withdrew toward this ridge. They fought back against Gen. Stephen D. Ramseur's advancing Confederates. The US troops here left to regroup north and west. At the same time the 8th Vermont and the rest of Thomas's brigade crossed the nearby ravine to cover their retreat. Some Confederate soldiers began to leave the fight. Hungry, cold, and wet, they stopped to loot abandoned Federal campsites.

Trail to CCBF Museum & Visitor Center

Go left at the junction to return to the 8th Vermont Monument and the Morning Attack Trails parking. Go right to the CCBF Museum & Visitor Center via Long Meadows Lane and trails at the museum.

The Battle Continues

After Hayes, Kitching, and Thomas retreated, Confederates chased the US troops north. The Confederate assault stopped at Middletown. They may have halted because of exhaustion. Some of their soldiers left the fighting to plunder. Before noon, US Gen. Phillip Sheridan returned to his army from Winchester. His presence electrified his tired soldiers.

That afternoon the US army counterattacked. The Confederate line buckled after a tough fight on the northern edge of Middletown. These fields filled again with soldiers. This time US troops pursued retreating Confederates. It was a complete reversal, and the battle of Cedar Creek ended as an important Federal victory.