



Foundation Document Overview

Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument

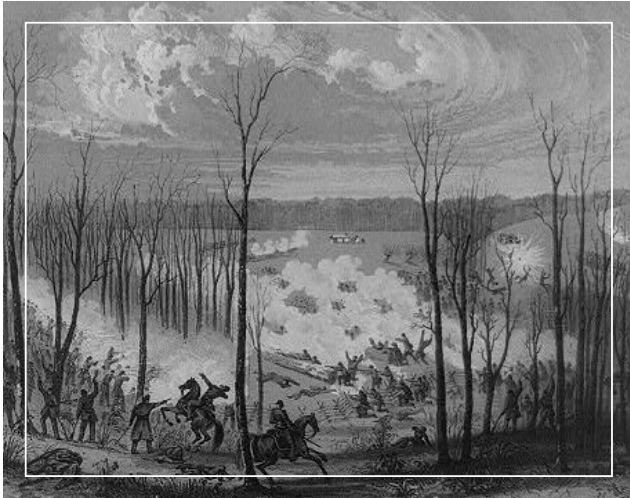
Kentucky



Contact Information

For more information about the *Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument Foundation Document*, contact: misp_superintendent@nps.gov or (606) 636-4045 or write to:
Superintendent, Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument, 9020 W Highway 80, Nancy, KY 42544

Purpose



MILL SPRINGS BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL MONUMENT in southern Kentucky preserves and interprets the nationally significant historic resources associated with the 1862 Battle of Mill Springs, the first major United States victory in the Western Theater of the American Civil War.



Significance

Significance statements express why Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Fought on January 19, 1862, the Battle of Mill Springs was the first major United States victory in the Western Theater of the Civil War, breaking the Confederate defensive line across the border state of Kentucky, capturing the attention of national press outlets, and providing a much-needed morale boost to those supporting the United States.
- Victory at Mill Springs showcased General George Henry Thomas' strong strategic understanding of warfare and began his rise as a key figure in the campaigns that secured US Army success in the Western Theater. The native Virginian went on to provide pivotal support during the Battle of Chickamauga, the Atlanta Campaign, and the Battle of Nashville.
- The natural defensive barrier created by the Cumberland River and surrounding cliffs and ravines led Confederate forces to construct a fortified encampment at Mill Springs in an attempt to keep political control of Kentucky, a state considered essential to the United States and Confederate military strategies.
- Historic and archeological resources associated with the 1861–1862 Confederate winter encampment and January 1862 Battle of Mill Springs, as well as the surrounding rural landscape, historic structures, and notable geographic features, maintain integrity and convey information about the battle, military and civilian life, and the relationship between soldiers and local Kentuckians during the early days of the American Civil War.
- The commemorative monuments and landscapes at Zollicoffer Park, all of which are Confederate, demonstrate the Nancy community's complicated and conflicting feelings surrounding the Civil War and are representative examples of local memorialization efforts that occurred throughout the South following the Civil War.

Fundamental Resources and Values



Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Core Battlefield**
- **Beech Grove Encampment**
- **West–Metcalf House**
- **Brown–Lanier House and South Encampment**
- **Museum Collections**
- **Zollicoffer Park**

Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Appropriate Recreational Opportunities**



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Conflict in Society.** Kentucky's location and complex political stance regarding secession and slavery shaped early military strategies and placed the state squarely as the focus of the initial struggle for control of the Western Theater during the American Civil War.
- **Successes and Failures of the Battle.** The Battle of Mill Springs represents the wide range of challenges faced by armies engaged in early Civil War battles and illustrates how numerous forces can contribute to the outcome of an individual battle and combine with larger forces to determine the victor of the overarching war.
- **Impacts of the Battle.** The US Army victory at Mill Springs, in concert with other early Union successes, struck a decisive blow against the Confederate defensive strategy in Kentucky, boosted Northern morale, and opened the way for a Federal push into Tennessee. Kentucky's complicated social, political, and cultural position continued to influence military and political strategies throughout the war.
- **Allegiances.** The national divisions over slavery forced citizens to choose allegiances that could support their morals and conscience. The experiences of the soldiers and civilians whose lives were touched by the Battle of Mill Springs reflect the array of motivations that led people to align or reject their country, state, or family and face the implications of their choice.
- **Realities of War.** The encampments at Beech Grove and Mill Springs offer insight into the daily lives of Civil War soldiers. The camps and structures that hosted the troops also underscore the complex relationship between military forces and the local civilian community as frontlines and contested lands continued to change hands throughout the course of the war.
- **Memory and Commemoration.** Zollicoffer Park and the nearby Mill Springs National Cemetery offer a window into memorialization trends over the last 150 years. Traditions and markers create opportunities to explore the shifting tides of memory associated with the conflict's cause and lasting cultural impacts.

Description

The Battle of Mill Springs was one of Kentucky's largest Civil War battles and gave the US Army its first major victory in the war following the disastrous defeat at the Battle of First Manassas (Bull Run) the previous summer. From the early days of the American Civil War, it was evident that Kentucky held incredible strategic importance, with the Confederate States of America (CSA) hoping to hold the Cumberland Gap and the United States of America seeing southern Kentucky as the gateway to Confederate strongholds in Tennessee and beyond. On January 19, 1862, Union troops led by Generals George Thomas and Albert Schoepf and Confederates who had set up a winter encampment on the north bank of the Cumberland River under Brigadier General Felix Zollicoffer met at Logan's Crossroads (now called Nancy, Kentucky). The Confederate defeat at Mill Springs caused the CSA defensive line to collapse in eastern Kentucky, leaving the region under Federal control. The battle also provided a much-needed morale boost to those supporting the United States.

Established in 2020, Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument includes three discontinuous areas that together tell the story of the events leading up to, during, and immediately following the battle: the core battlefield, the Beech Grove fortified encampment, and the Mill Springs fortified ferry landing site. The core battlefield outside the town of Nancy in Pulaski County, Kentucky, includes the visitor center and the area of the heaviest fighting—previously recognized as Zollicoffer Park. South of the battlefield sits Beech Grove fortified Confederate encampment with archeological evidence of the cabins and fortifications constructed by Confederate troops during the winter of 1861–1862.

On the southern shore of Lake Cumberland in Wayne County, the Mill Springs fortified ferry landing was used to transport troops and supplies across the Cumberland River. This southern-most area includes the Brown–Lanier House, a residence that served as a US and Confederate military headquarters; the West-Metcalf House, a modest home that was used as a field hospital after the battle; and the site of the water-powered mill and springs that gave Mill Springs its name. The existing mill, the 13 springs that feed into it, and the Brown–Lanier House sit within Mill Springs Park, a recreational area managed by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

