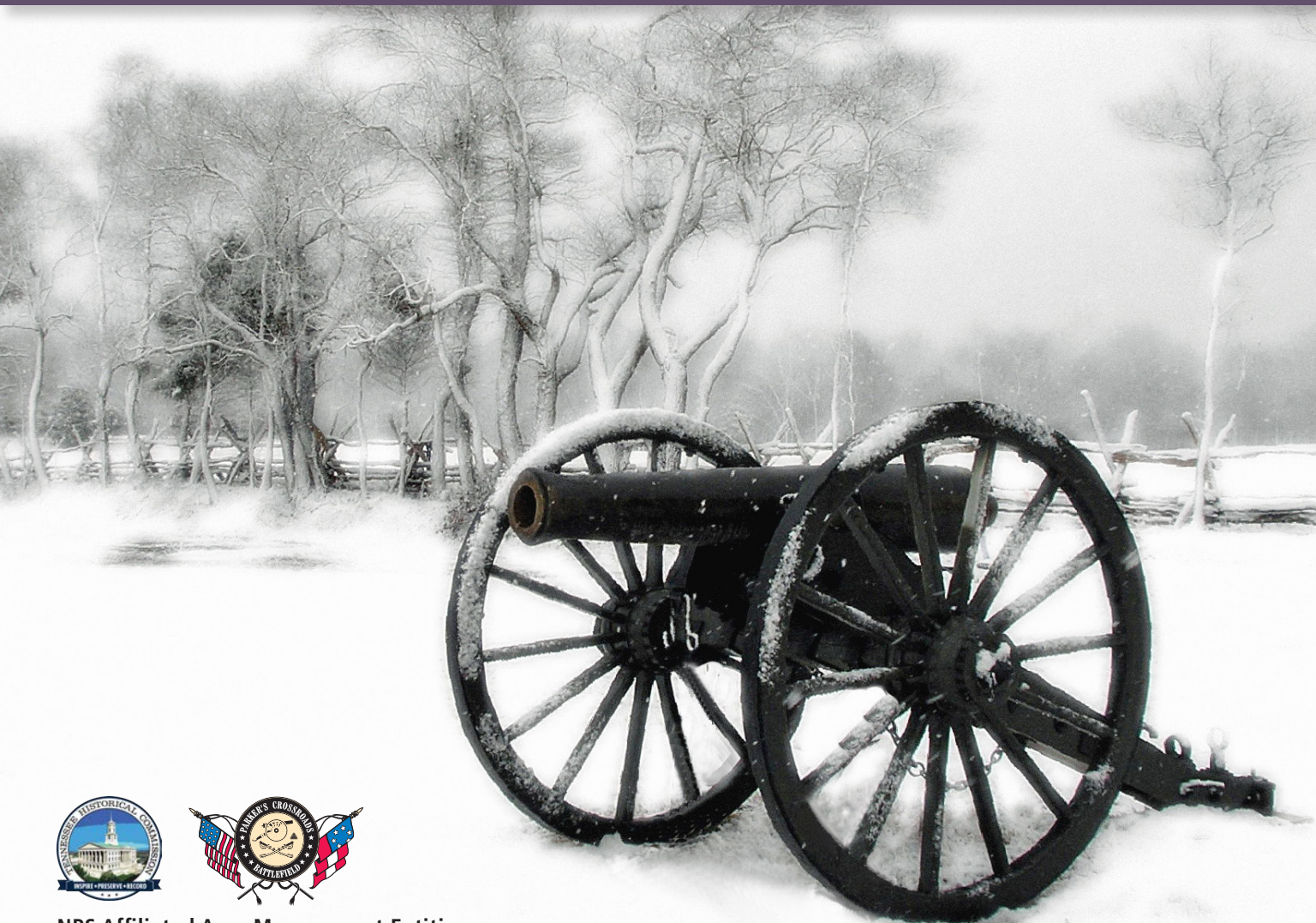




Foundation Document Overview

Parker's Crossroads Battlefield

Tennessee



NPS Affiliated Area Management Entities:
Tennessee Historical Commission • City of Parkers Crossroads

Contact Information

For more information about the *Parker's Crossroads Battlefield Foundation Document*,
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Purpose



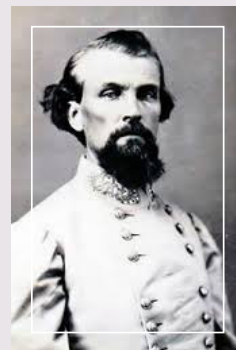
PARKER'S CROSSROADS BATTLEFIELD preserves and interprets the places, events, people, and stories surrounding the engagement of Union and Confederate forces on December 31, 1862, and the battle's influence on the Mississippi Valley Campaign and Siege of Vicksburg during the Civil War.



Significance

Significance statements express why an affiliated area's resources and values are important enough to merit designation as a National Park Service affiliated area. These statements are linked to the purpose of Parker's Crossroads Battlefield and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Statements of significance describe the distinctive nature of the affiliated area and why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. They focus on the most important resources and values that will assist in planning and management.

- Parker's Crossroads was the climactic engagement of Confederate Brigadier General Nathan Bedford Forrest's West Tennessee raid of December 1862, which, along with Confederate General Earl Van Dorn's simultaneous raid on Holly Springs, Mississippi, resulted in the disruption of Union Major General Ulysses S. Grant's rail supply lines during his initial advance toward Vicksburg. The concurrent raids represent the first and only time the use of cavalry alone was a decisive factor in a major campaign of the Civil War.
- The battlefield and archeological resources of Parker's Crossroads retain integrity. The core battlefield is comprised of agricultural fields and forests that are potentially consistent with its appearance in 1862, providing a sense of place and an opportunity for visitors to connect to the landscape.
- Generations of descendant families have occupied Parker's Crossroads, many of whom were ideologically divided during the Civil War. Familial connections to the battle are maintained with the site today, reflected throughout the area in cemeteries, homesites, farmsteads, and oral histories.
- Parker's Crossroads provides an excellent opportunity to understand Nathan Bedford Forrest's battlefield doctrine, including his leadership qualities and tactics, which were fundamental to his battle style throughout 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 affiliated area and maintaining its significance.

- **Battlefield Landscape**
- **Archeological Resources**
- **Opportunities for Reflection**
- **Partnerships**

Parker's Crossroads Battlefield contains other resources and values that are not fundamental to the purpose of the affiliated area and may be unrelated to its significance but are important to consider in planning processes. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Community Connections**
- **Recreational Opportunities**
- **McPeake Cabin and Associated Structures**



Interpretive Themes

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

- **Role of Parker's Crossroads in the Civil War.** Parker's Crossroads Battlefield is an opportunity to understand Union and Confederate leadership decisions, military strategy, and the battle's prolonging effect on the Mississippi River Valley Campaign (Siege of Vicksburg) and larger conflict of the Civil War. Parker's Crossroad is the culminating point of Forrest's West Tennessee raid, which coupled with the destruction of the Holly Springs depots by Van Dorn and Forrest's destruction of the Mobile and Ohio Railroad, postponed the fall of Vicksburg for six months. Furthermore, the raids of Forrest and Van Dorn have been used as examples for present-day military maneuvers by which a self-sustained unit may attack an enemy's center behind enemy lines without expending the bulk of their resources.
- **Impacts on People.** As one of the most ideologically divided states, Tennessee's free and enslaved families faced hardships and sacrifices during the Civil War. Parker's Crossroads Battlefield is an area where visitors and families may learn more about the cost of war on individuals and families and their fortitude and resilience and their own ancestral connections to the battle. The period buildings on site are tangible reminders of what life was like for individuals before, during, and after the Civil War and the vast changes that occurred in their lives.
- **Evolving Views of the Civil War and its Commemoration.** Parker's Crossroads Battlefield stands as a place to reflect upon this nation's history, her deep division during the Civil War, and her trajectory to a "more perfect union." Following the war, the lives of Tennesseans were forever changed. The human cost of the Civil War, the emancipation of enslaved individuals and families, and the challenges of reestablishing the nation after the war fundamentally changed the United States. The period of Reconstruction included new Constitutional amendments (13, 14, and 15) that outlawed slavery, redefined citizenship, and brought suffrage to a previously disenfranchised group of men. The impacts of these tumultuous times are still felt in the 21st century.

Description

Parker's Crossroads Battlefield is in the community of Parkers Crossroads in Henderson County, Tennessee, 26 miles east of Jackson, Tennessee. The battlefield gets its name from the city of Parkers Crossroads, settled in 1830 by Reverend John Parker. Parker's Crossroads Battlefield is the site of a cavalry engagement between the forces of Confederate Brigadier General Nathan Bedford Forrest and Union forces under Colonel Cyrus L. Dunham and Colonel John W. Fuller. The battle is the climactic engagement of Forrest's West Tennessee raid of December 1862, which, along with Confederate General Earl Van Dorn's simultaneous raid on Holly Springs, Mississippi, resulted in the disruption of Union Major General Ulysses S. Grant's supply lines during his initial advance toward Vicksburg, Mississippi.

At Parker's Crossroads, Dunham and Fuller caught up with Forrest's retreating forces. Dunham's brigade moved to block Forrest along a ridge across the McLemoresville Road. On the morning of December 31, Dunham's and Forrest's forces fought on this ridge, and Dunham's brigade retreated south to a new position. Forrest moved his forces against Dunham's new line, and fighting took place along the Huntingdon-Lexington Road. Fearing he would be flanked, Dunham moved again before coming under severe artillery fire and retreating to a new position along a split rail fence. Here, Dunham's men, attacked from the north and south, began to surrender. At this moment, Fuller's brigade arrived. Forrest assembled a small force to attack Fuller's brigade, allowing Forrest to retreat and ending the battle. Forrest and his remaining forces crossed the river and escaped.

Both the Union and Confederacy fought fiercely over Tennessee. Eight months after leaving the Union, it became the first Confederate state reclaimed. Union successes at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in February 1862 left the capital of Nashville abandoned by Confederate forces. Despite the capture of the capital early in the war, Tennessee was still the site of some of the bloodiest fighting at Shiloh, Stones River, Chattanooga, and Franklin. On April 6 and 7, 1862, Union forces won a decisive victory at Shiloh, allowing them to seize control of the Confederate railway junction at Corinth, Mississippi, on May 30. The victories at Shiloh and Corinth set the stage for the Union capture of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863.

The Union effort to take Vicksburg began in May 1862, though Grant's initial overland advance from Tennessee did not begin until November. Grant drew supplies along 180 miles of railroad, stretching from Columbus, Kentucky, to Holly Springs where he established a supply depot. Recognizing the vulnerability of Grant's supplies, Confederate General Braxton Bragg ordered Forrest to launch a raid into Tennessee on November 21, 1862. Forrest crossed the Tennessee River and reached Jackson, Tennessee, on December 19. Forrest's command destroyed Grant's supply lines, while a simultaneous raid by Van Dorn destroyed the supply depot.

Forrest's and Van Dorn's successful raids on Grant's rail supply line and supply depot postponed Grant's Vicksburg offensive by six months. When Union forces began siege operations on Vicksburg in mid-May 1863, defending Confederate Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton surrendered after 47 days. Despite the delay that Forrest and Van Dorn caused, the Union victory at Vicksburg, combined with their victory at Gettysburg, represented a key turning point in the Civil War in favor of the Union.

