

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

BENTONVILLE BATTLEFIELD

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: BENTONVILLE BATTLEFIELD

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Along State Routes 1008 & 1009

Not for publication: ___

City/Town: Newton Grove & Bentonville

Vicinity: ___

State: NC County: Johnston Code: 101

Zip Code: 28366

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X
Public-Local: ___
Public-State: X
Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property

Building(s): ___
District: X
Site: ___
Structure: ___
Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1
1
22
24

Noncontributing

159 buildings
15 sites
78 structures
4 objects
256 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 24

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this _____ nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ____ Entered in the National Register _____
- ____ Determined eligible for the National Register _____
- ____ Determined not eligible for the National Register _____
- ____ Removed from the National Register _____
- ____ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

<p>Historic:</p> <p>DEFENSE DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE</p> <p>TRANSPORTATION INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/ EXTRACTION</p>	<p>Sub:</p> <p>Battle Site Single Dwelling Unoccupied Land Forest Natural Feature Road-related (vehicular) Waterworks</p>
<p>Current:</p> <p>AGRICULTURAL/SUBSISTANCE RECREATION & CULTURE</p> <p>FUNERARY TRANSPORTATION DOMESTIC RELIGION</p>	<p>Sub:</p> <p>Agricultural Field Animal Facility Monument/Marker Outdoor Recreation Museum Cemetery Road-related (vehicular) Single Dwelling Religious Facility</p>

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: N/A

MATERIALS:

Foundation:
Walls:
Roof:
Other:

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Page 4**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

The Battle of Bentonville (March 19-21, 1865) occurred in the southern portion of Johnston County, North Carolina, in proximity to both the Sampson and Wayne County lines. The battlefield remains largely unchanged from its 1865 appearance. Modern agricultural practices coexist with residential development in narrow strips along state roads. As a result the field is easily recognizable with the troop positions and their movements easily traced. Extensive remains of fieldworks exist throughout the area.

Confederate Lt. Gen. Wade Hampton selected the site for the battle while engaging portions of Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman's advancing Union army. On March 18, Hampton, in a message to his commander, Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, described a position on the "eastern edge of a large plantation [Cole's], extending a mile and a half to the west, and lying principally on the north side of the [Goldsboro] road [State Route 1008], and surrounded by thickets of blackjack."¹ The Goldsboro road was enclosed on either side by the described thickets at this position, and maneuver would be further hampered by an "impenetrable swamp" south of the road, and a series of ravines and broken terrain to the north. Participants in the first day's engagement from the Twentieth Union Army Corps likened the ground to that which they had encountered in the vicinity of Chancellorsville and The Wilderness of Virginia. In general, it may be said that the first day's battlefield was marked by alternating open fields and thickets, with dense swamps south and considerable ravines north of the Goldsboro road.

As the battle progressed north and east, the participants noted a change in the terrain encountered. Several members of the Union Fifteenth and Seventeenth Corps described the woodland as being composed of large stands of pine, with fairly open forest floor, as opposed to the dense undergrowth encountered on the western side of the field. The respective armies confronted each other across a small branch of Mill Creek, known locally at the time as "Sam Howell Branch." This branch apparently posed little hindrance to maneuver in the central areas of the field, as little mention is made of it, other than the fact that the Confederate lines lay on the opposite side. However, farther to the northeast, near the convergence of Sam Howell Branch and Mill Creek, the stream must have become a matter of great concern. The advance of Mower's division on March 21 became entangled in a portion of the branch from which one brigade required nearly forty-five minutes to extract itself.

Mill Creek, usually a small branch barely large enough for small craft to navigate, posed quite an obstacle and played a pivotal role in the battle. Swollen by several consecutive days of rain, the creek's rising waters threatened to flood the one bridge at Bentonville, which happened to be the only route by which the Confederate army could withdraw from the field after the arrival of Sherman's right wing. Johnston, as a result, positioned his headquarters in Bentonville in order to keep an eye on the rising creek. A modern bridge is located about 75 yards from the location where the historic bridge once stood.

Almost all of the buildings present during the battle have been lost. The one exception is the Harper House located within the Bentonville Battleground State Historic Site. Many historic structures which played a role in the battle remain. Primarily these consist of a large number of fieldworks, which were constructed during the battle, and the historic road system which is basically reflected in the current state road system. In addition, the dam which creates Blackman Pond is considered a historic structure even though there have been modern

¹ U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (hereafter referred to as *OR*), (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1891-1895), Series I, Vol. 47, Part II, 1334.

additions to it. The following is a list of all buildings and structures considered contributing; the number coincides with the map reference on map #1.

1. Harper House

Used as the field hospital for the Union Fourteenth Army Corps. The house is a two-story wood frame dwelling with a hipped roof. The rooms are in a four-over-four configuration with two interior chimneys. The house is slightly elevated on brick piers.

The Harper House has some minor deterioration. The wood shingle roof has aged and will need to be replaced soon. The brick pier foundations and underpinnings are experiencing some deterioration.

The following description is from the National Register Nomination for the Harper House:

The front (east) facade is three bays wide with large sash windows of nine-over-nine on the first level and nine-over-six on the second. The facade is dominated by a two-story pedimented portico, each story of which is supported by two wooden pillars and enclosed with simple balustrades. The central entrance is flanked by unadorned pilasters and framed by large sidelights and a wide eight-light transom. The transom is surmounted by a horizontal band of six octagonal flat panels. A similar doorway, lacking the paneled band, opens onto the second level of the portico.

The sides of the house are two bays wide. The rear facade is similar to the front but lacks the two-story portico. The mass of the building is emphasized by the heavy overhang of the cornice and the large cornerposts which take the form of paneled pilasters.

The interior has a center-hall plan two rooms deep. The rooms are quite plain with plaster walls above heavy baseboards. All of the mantels are of simple similar designs, featuring heavy shelves above ranges of three horizontal flat panels. The woodwork of the northeast parlor is enriched by a chair rail and small bands of reeding on the mantel. The rooms to the south of the main hall on the first floor have doors in their south walls leading out to the detached kitchen and slave quarters. The second floor, essentially identical to the first in plan, is reached by a narrow stair which rises in two flights from the left side of the main hall.

There are two dependencies on the property but, although these buildings most likely date from the Civil War period, they were moved to the Harper House property during the ownership of the family after the Harpers (probably in the 1890s). These buildings have no connection to the Bentonville Battlefield.

2. Goldsboro Road

Currently State Route 1008, this road was a major landmark during fighting on March 19. The road has a modern asphalt surface.

3. Bentonville Road

Currently State Route 1009, this road was the major route of retreat for Confederate forces. In addition, it connected the Confederate headquarters area with the front lines. The road has a modern asphalt surface.

4. Mower's flanking road

Currently State Route 1198, this road was used by Maj. Gen Joseph Mower's division to move on the Confederate left. The road has a modern asphalt surface. A portion of the road bed, where it makes a figure "s" curve about 2500 feet east of the town of Bentonville, is not in the original location. As this is only a slight deviation from the original bed, it does not affect the integrity of this road.

5. Ravine or Hobart's Road

6. Blackman Pond Dam

The dam creates Blackman Pond. The historic road was laid on top of the dam; however, the modern road, State Route 1136, is now located just north of the dam. There was some stabilization done during the early 20th Century when a concrete spillway was added.

FIELDWORKS

Bentonville battlefield has a large number of remaining fieldworks. The fieldworks are basically in good condition. For the most part they average two to four feet in height and are approximately ten to twelve feet wide. They exist in varying lengths which are identified in the individual references.

6. Union earthworks. Third Division, Twentieth Army Corps. Approximately 1700 feet long.

7. Union earthworks. First Division, Twentieth Army Corps. Approximately 1000 feet long.

8. Union earthworks. First Division, Fourteenth Army Corps. Approximately 1100 feet long.

9. Union earthworks. Fourteenth Army Corps. Approximately 750 feet long.

10. Union earthworks. Second Division, Fourteenth Army Corps. Approximately 1300 feet long.

11. Union earthworks. First Brigade, First Division, Fourteenth Army Corps. Approximately 500 feet long.

12. Union earthworks. Second Brigade, First Division, Fourteenth Army Corps. Approximately 500 feet long.

13. Confederate earthworks. Hoke's Division, Department of North Carolina. Position of March 19, 1865. Approximately 300 feet long.

14. Confederate earthworks. Hoke's Division, Department of North Carolina. Position of March 20 & 21, 1865. Approximately 200 feet long.

15. Confederate earthworks. McLaw's Division, Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Position of March 20 & 21, 1865. Approximately 600 feet long.

16. Union earthworks. First Division, Fifteenth Army Corps. Approximately 800 feet long.

17. Union earthworks. Third Division, Seventeenth Army Corps. Approximately 1300 feet long.

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18. Union earthworks. First Division, Seventeenth Army Corps. Approximately 200 feet long.

19. Confederate earthworks. Wheeler's Cavalry Corps. Approximately 600 feet long.

20. Confederate earthworks. Wheeler's Cavalry Corps. Approximately 600 feet long.

21. Confederate earthworks. Blanchard's Brigade, McLaw's Division, Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Approximately 3000 feet long (in two sections) and two battery positions behind the main line.

22. Confederate earthworks. Taliaferro's Division, Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Approximately 250 feet long.

23. Confederate earthworks. Bate's Division, Cheatham's Corps, Army of Tennessee. Approximately 400 feet long. A small portion of this line has original wood revetment still in place.

Distribution of Contributing and Non-Contributing Resources

See attached 7.5 min. Quad (map #2) for grid area designations.

GRID AREA #1:

Contributing structures: Confederate Earthworks #21 (see listing above for earthwork numbers)
2 historic road sections (currently State Routes 1009 and 1198)
Blackman Pond Dam

Non-contributing buildings: 20 residential
1 church
1 community center
12 abandoned residential or agricultural support buildings (tobacco barns or poultry sheds)

Non-contributing structures: 2 portions of modern asphalt surfaced roads, State Route 1136 and State Route 1197

Non-contributing sites: 1 cemetery

GRID AREA #2:

Contributing structures: Union earthworks #17 & 18
Confederate earthworks #19 & 20
1 historic road section (currently State Route 1198)

Non-contributing buildings: 16 residential
8 turkey/swine barns
3 abandoned agricultural (tobacco barns or poultry sheds)

Non-contributing structures: 2 portions of modern asphalt surfaced roads, State Route 1197 and State Route 1199
2 small unnamed county/local roads

Non-contributing sites: 3 cemeteries

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GRID AREA #3:

Contributing structures: Confederate earthworks #14 & 15
Union earthworks #16
2 historic road sections (currently State Routes 1008 and 1009)

Non-contributing buildings: 32 residential
2 churches
1 commercial
1 volunteer fire dept.
13 abandoned residential and/or agricultural support structures
(tobacco barns or poultry sheds)
3 turkey/swine barns

Non-contributing structures: 1 portion of modern asphalt surfaced road, State
Route 1197
1 unnamed county/local road

Non-contributing sites: 3 cemeteries

GRID AREA #4:

Contributing Structures: Union earthworks #11 & 12
Confederate earthworks #13, 22, 23, 24, & 25
3 historic road sections (currently State Routes 1008 and 1009,
and Ravine or Hobart's Road, a small unnamed
county/local road)

Non-contributing buildings: 13 residential
4 swine barns
7 agricultural (tobacco barns or poultry sheds)

Non-contributing structures: 1 portion of modern asphalt surfaced road, State Route
1194
2 unnamed county/local roads

Non-contributing sites: 2 cemeteries

Non-contributing objects: 1 monument (UDC)

GRID AREA #5:

Contributing buildings: 1 Harper House

Contributing structures: Union earthworks #6,7,8,9, & 10
1 historic road section (currently State Route 1008)

Non-contributing buildings: 2 Harper House dependencies
31 residential
1 visitor center (State of North Carolina)
25 agricultural/swine barns

Non-contributing structures: 4 portions of modern asphalt surfaced roads, State Route
1188, State Route 1192, State Route 1190, and 2
unnamed county/local roads

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Non-contributing sites: 6 cemeteries

Non-contributing objects: 3 monuments (Texas, North Carolina, and Confederate mass grave)

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B X C ___ D ___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___

NHL Criteria: 1, 2

NHL Theme [1987]: VI. The Civil War
B. War in the East

NHL Theme [1994]: IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
3. Military Institutions & Activities

Areas of Significance: Military

Period(s) of Significance: March 19-21, 1865

Significant Dates: March 19-21, 1865

Significant Person(s): William T. Sherman
Joseph E. Johnston

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: N/A

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**INTRODUCTION**

The Battle of Bentonville, where two military titans of the Civil War—Gens. William T. Sherman and Joseph E. Johnston—faced each other for the final time in a major battle, was the last occasion on which a Confederate army mounted an all-out offensive during the Civil War. In it, Confederates sought to overwhelm a wing of a major Union army. The battle was Johnston and his Confederates' only chance to stop Sherman, who had run rampant from Atlanta to the sea and north into the Carolinas. It was also Johnston's only remaining opportunity to even his personal score with Sherman, who had bested him before Atlanta and caused his relief and reassignment. The loss here was the Confederacy's death knell, for it fatally weakened their last mobile field army.

Fought on March 19-21, 1865, Bentonville was the largest battle fought in North Carolina, and demonstrated that, even in its final days, the Confederacy was still capable of executing a major logistical operation—the concentration of Johnston's army in North Carolina. Nearly 90,000 combatants contested approximately 6,000 acres of land; no other engagement during the remainder of the war involved as many men or covered as much ground.

NARRATIVE

During the month of March 1865 the Confederacy had few options remaining to strike a decisive blow against the Union forces moving through the Carolinas. Gen. Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia were pinned down in the trenches of Richmond and Petersburg. Confederate forces in Alabama and the Trans-Mississippi Department were scattered and ineffective. The Army of Tennessee had been badly mauled during the battles for Atlanta and at Franklin and Nashville. Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman was moving his Union army north through the Carolinas, after successfully "Marching to the Sea" from Atlanta and capturing Savannah, Georgia. Sherman hoped to join with a Union army working inland from Wilmington, North Carolina and ultimately with Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant and the Union armies facing Lee. In order to slow or stop the advance of Sherman's 60,000 veterans, Lee, who had assumed overall command of the Confederate armies, appointed Gen Joseph E. Johnston to command in North Carolina. This command consisted of troops of the Army of Tennessee in northeastern Mississippi, the Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, and the Department of North Carolina.¹

The concentration of the forces available to Johnston was a remarkable logistical accomplishment. Johnston brought together remnants of the Army of the Tennessee, now commanded by Lt. Gen. A.P. Stewart, from northeastern Mississippi, troops from Maj. Gen. Robert F. Hoke's Division of the Army of Northern Virginia, and garrison troops from numerous coastal defenses in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina and united them in front of Sherman's army. The total strength still numbered fewer than 30,000 men. His only hope for success was to isolate the wings of Sherman's army, defeating each in turn.

Lt. Gen. William Hardee, commanding approximately 6,000 men of the Confederate Departments of Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina, engaged Sherman's left wing near the

¹ Joseph E. Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1959; reprint, Millwood, New York: Krause Reprint, 1990), pp. 227, 378; U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (hereafter referred to as *OR*), (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1891-1895), Series I, Vol. 47, Part II, pp. 1274, 1334.

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small village of Averasboro on March 15-16, 1865, thus delaying that wing and increasing the distance between Sherman's left and right. Believing the Union columns to be out of supporting distance of each other, Johnston elected to strike once again at Sherman's left.² On March 18, Lt. Gen. Wade Hampton, commanding the Cavalry Corps, informed Johnston that the ground east of the Willis Cole plantation, south of the village of Bentonville, was suitable for offensive operations, and Johnston began to concentrate his forces there.³

The Willis Cole plantation lay approximately twenty miles west of Goldsboro and stood just north of the old Goldsboro road. Sherman's left wing would follow this road to Goldsboro, where Sherman expected to be reinforced by additional Union troops moving inland from Wilmington and Kinston. Troops from the Department of North Carolina, commanded by Gen. Braxton Bragg and Major General Hoke, entrenched across this road, directly in the path of the oncoming Federals. North of the Goldsboro road, the Confederate line curved to the west, where Hardee's and Stewart's men were concealed by trees. Johnston intended for Bragg and Hoke to engage the Union advance, thus allowing Hardee and Stewart to sweep down on the Federal left from their positions to the north.

Sherman accompanied Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum's left wing after the battle of Averasboro. He expected little serious resistance before reaching Goldsboro. He was unaware, however, that a Confederate army was entrenched in his path. Johnston's cavalry engaged the Federal foragers before light on the morning of March 19. Regarding this as an insignificant threat, Sherman directed Slocum to press forward. He then departed to join his right wing, commanded by Maj. Gen. O. O. Howard. The Southern cavalry fiercely contested the Union advance as Johnston completed his deployment.⁴

In an effort to clear Goldsboro Road of the enemy, Slocum deployed the brigades of Brig. Gen. Harrison C. Hobart and Brig. Gen. George P. Buell of Brig. Gen. William P. Carlin's First Division, Fourteenth Army Corps. After an enemy artillery battery fired upon the advancing Federals, a Union battery was deployed to the right of Hobart, and Lt. Col. David Miles's brigade moved to the right of the battery. Miles' brigade advanced through a swamp which protected the Confederate battery. Johnston's men had prepared substantial field fortifications which the Federals found difficult to identify in the woods and brush. After passing through the swamp and woods, Miles' brigade advanced on this line of earthworks, suffering heavy losses. Further to the right, the Second Division of the Fourteenth Army Corps, under the command of Brig. Gen. James D. Morgan, had moved into position and began to fortify the area.⁵

Buell's brigade, on the Union left, had followed a road past a frame building until it came in contact with the Confederates. Unfortunately, this brigade had shifted so far to the left that a gap had formed between it and Hobart's brigade. Brig. Gen. James S. Robinson's brigade of the First Division, Twentieth Army Corps, advanced to fill in the gap between Buell and

² *OR*, Series I, Vol. 47, Part I, pp. 66, 442, 586, 637, 789, 871, 880, 889-890, 1084-1086, 1089; Part II, pg. 1361; Johnston, pg. 582.

³ *OR*, Series I, Vol. 47, Part II, pg. 1429.

⁴ William P. Carlin, "The Battle of Bentonville," in *Sketches of War History 1861-1865*, Robert Hunter, ed., Ohio Commandery, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS), (Cincinnati, Ohio: Robert Clarke and Company, 1890), Vol. III, pp. 231-251.

⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 237-239.

Hobart. Slocum now had a battery in position and four brigades moving on the Confederate lines east of Cole's Plantation.⁶

Although the Union forces posed little threat as they tested the Confederate position, the movement south of Goldsboro Road unsettled Bragg, who then called for reinforcements. Hardee's command was just arriving on the field from Averasboro. Johnston immediately dispatched one of Hardee's two divisions, commanded by Maj. Gen. Lafayette McLaws, to Bragg's assistance. But the reinforcement was unnecessary, and served only to weaken the main assault Johnston intended to execute on the Union line.⁷

While Slocum's men prepared their positions, Johnston assembled his main assault force preparatory to attacking the Union positions. Hours passed as troops shuffled into position and orders were relayed. It was after three o'clock before Stewart's Army of Tennessee and Hardee's remaining division advanced from their entrenched lines north of the Goldsboro Road. The Confederate advance crushed the Union left, striking its exposed left flank composed of four brigades north of the Goldsboro road and routing each in turn. In addition, portions of the Confederate advance succeeded in overrunning a battery of Union artillery. The Union left flank retreated back upon units arriving from the west. Several Union officers from the Twentieth Corps likened the scene to Confederate Lt. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's rout of Union Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard's Eleventh Corps at Chancellorsville in 1863. The Confederate attacks became disrupted by the same ravines that prevented a cohesive Union line north of the road. Many of the Confederates stopped to pillage the knapsacks and equipment discarded by fleeing Union troops.⁸

While Hardee attempted to reorganize the tangled Confederate lines, Brig. Gen. James D. Morgan, whose division held the Union right flank below the Goldsboro road, reacted quickly to the dispersal of the Union left. Morgan dispatched two Union brigades from his lines facing Bragg to the east, and struck the exposed flank of Hardee's attacking columns as they passed to the north. These counterattacks further distracted Hardee's formations, who turned their attention to Morgan's men south of the road. Before day's end, Morgan's division would come under attack from three sides, with the Union defenders leaping to alternate sides of the log earthworks to fight off uncoordinated Confederate attacks. Two stands of Confederate colors were lost during the struggle for Morgan's breastworks, said to have been the heaviest fighting on the field. Throughout the afternoon, Morgan's men held and purchased valuable time for Slocum, who busily prepared for a renewal of the conflict north of the Goldsboro road. In later years, it was said that Morgan's defense of his field fortifications "saved Sherman's reputation," as well as the left wing of the Union army.⁹

Slocum established a secondary line on a slight rise approximately three-quarters of a mile west of the Cole plantation, and anchored the center of this line by massing every available piece of artillery he could bring to the front. Believing that this massed battery shielded a weakness in the Union line, Hardee reformed his tangled lines and launched them directly at the center of Slocum's new line. Between Hardee's men and Slocum's field guns lay nearly

⁶ Carlin, pp. 235-239; Charles E. Slocum, *The Life and Services of Major General Henry Warner Slocum*, (Toledo, Ohio: The Slocum Publishing Company, 1913), pg. 274; *OR*, Series I, Vol. 47, Part I, pp. 423-425.

⁷ Johnston, pg. 386.

⁸ *OR*, Series I, Vol. 47, Part 1, pp. 449, 468, 1094, 1102, 1106; Carlin, pg. 245; A.C. McClurg, "The Last Chance of the Confederacy," *Atlantic Monthly*, 1 (Sept. 1882): pg. 393.

⁹ Carlin, pp. 237-238.

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six hundred yards of open ground, and the Federal gunners wasted little time in opening on the inviting target presented by the Confederate infantry lines. The results of Hardee's assault were predictable; Union artillery fire shattered the Confederate formations. One southern participant swore that he never saw a spot on the field at Gettysburg as hot as that before Slocum's guns. Another recalled that the Union shot and shell "literally barked the trees, cutting limbs as neatly as if they had been cut by hand."¹⁰ Unable to break either Morgan's line south of the Goldsboro road, or Slocum's new position to the north, Johnston ordered his men to return to their defensive positions. In hopes of a victory similar to that achieved at Kennesaw Mountain in June 1864, Johnston decided to hold his position and invite a Union attack.¹¹

But Sherman could not be enticed to repeat the Kennesaw debacle by launching his men against Johnston's lines. Informed of Slocum's desperate fight in the late evening hours of March 19, Sherman marched his right wing to the relief of the left, and completed the junction by early afternoon on the 20th. Johnston changed front to meet the Union right wing, drawing his army into a defensive arch covering the bridge over Mill Creek—now his sole route of retreat from the field. Anxious to reach Goldsboro, where he could rest and refit his army, Sherman did not desire to initiate a general engagement, but probed the Confederate position for an opportunity to turn Johnston's flank. The Federals maintained steady pressure on Johnston's thin lines, and the resulting stalemate, accompanied by steady skirmishing all along the line, continued into the early afternoon of March 21.¹²

On March 21, Maj. Gen. Joseph A. Mower's division of the Union Seventeenth Corps formed the extreme right of the Federal line. Mower believed that his position was beyond the Rebel left flank, and solicited permission from his corps commander, Maj. Gen. Frank Blair, to conduct a reconnaissance of the ground in his front. Mower advanced with two brigades and easily penetrated the extreme Confederate left, which was held by a thin screen of dismounted cavalry. Pressing forward through a dense, confusing swamp, Mower emerged near the village of Bentonville, and found himself within a few hundred yards of Johnston's headquarters and Mill Creek Bridge.

The Confederate headquarters was in chaos; if the bridge over Mill Creek were lost, the army could well be destroyed. Hardee frantically threw whatever units he could find against the Federal threat. The first units to arrive, two small cavalry regiments, struck Mower's brigades as they attempted to realign after emerging from the swamp before continuing the advance. The Confederate counterattack confused the Union regiments, and Mower wisely withdrew. After dispatching requests for assistance, Mower advanced again, only to be recalled by Sherman.

During the late afternoon, Johnston abandoned his right flank and solidified the lines covering the bridge as the dead, wounded, and supply trains evacuated the field. The main body of the Confederate army soon followed across the river. By the morning of March 22, only a small Confederate rear guard remained to contest Federal occupation of Bentonville and possession of Mill Creek Bridge. In his memoirs, Sherman admitted that his decision to recall Mower was a mistake, and that he should have followed that division's advance with

¹⁰ Samuel W. Ravenel, "Ask the Survivors of Bentonville," *Confederate Veteran*, XVIII, March 1910, pg. 124.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 214; *OR*, Series I, Vol. 47, Part I, pp. 587-88, 601, 612, 666-667, 1091.

¹² *OR*, Series I, Vol. 47, Part I, pp. 27, 236, 259, 1057, 1131-32; Johnston, pg. 389; Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard*, (New York: Baker & Taylor Company, 1907), Vol. 2, pg. 151.

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the entire right wing of his army. Such a movement would, in all probability, have resulted in the capture or destruction of Johnston's army. By allowing Johnston to withdraw across the river, the Civil War in North Carolina was prolonged by four weeks.¹³

The results of the three days of fighting at Bentonville were profound. Johnston had delayed Sherman's advance, but only briefly, and he failed to rout Sherman's left wing. The cost to Johnston was nearly 2,500 casualties which his depleted ranks could ill afford. Johnston's army was hereafter incapable of waging offensive warfare. Johnston's tactics were well-planned and executed, but his force was too weak to damage the Federals severely and the Federal response was too quick. Even if the Federal left wing had been destroyed at Bentonville, Johnston would still have had to contend with the right wing, which, if anything, was stronger. Furthermore, the reinforcements which reached Sherman at Goldsboro were more than enough to make up for any losses the Union forces may have suffered at Johnston's hand. Faced with this overwhelming opposition, Johnston did not try to break north into Virginia to join with the Army of Northern Virginia as the Confederate high command hoped. Within days, the battle of Five Forks in Virginia would force the Army of Northern Virginia to abandon its positions around Richmond and begin moving west to Appomattox. Johnston's surrender came 17 days later at Bennett Place, North Carolina.

CONCLUSION

The Battle of Bentonville briefly delayed the collapse of the Confederacy. Johnston skillfully maneuvered to get Sherman to divide his forces, but, because of errors by his senior general officers and the distances involved, was unable to exploit the situation. The battle, a Union victory, delayed the inevitable—for two reasons. On the one hand, the tenacity and unexpected scale of the Confederate offensive convinced Union Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, the general-in-chief of the Union forces, that Sherman should remain in North Carolina until he had compelled Johnston's army to surrender, rather than head north to cooperate in the investment of Petersburg. Second, Johnston's losses at Bentonville had destroyed his ability to wage successful offensive operations or to come to Lee's assistance in the Petersburg lines.

Lee, under unremitting pressure from Grant, abandoned Petersburg and Richmond on April 2, hoping to join Johnston, but surrendered a week later at Appomattox Court House, Virginia. With the continuing incapacitation of his army—the largest intact Confederate force remaining in the field east of the Mississippi—Johnston's surrender at the Bennett Place, North Carolina, some five weeks after the battle of Bentonville, was inevitable.

Confederate President Jefferson Davis, who had fled behind Johnston's lines, acceded to the surrender but continued his futile flight south, initially hoping to reach Texas where the last substantial Confederate force still held out. Johnston met with Sherman and surrendered on April 26, 1865. With this act, the war was virtually over, though Davis eluded capture until May 10 and the last land military action of the war—at Palmito Hill in south Texas—did not take place until May 12-13.

¹³ *OR*, Series I, Vol. 47, Part 1, pp. 27, 236, 259, 1057, 1131-32; Johnston, pp. 389-390; William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of William T. Sherman*, (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1891), 2:304.

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Warner, Ezra J. *Generals in Blue*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1964; reprint, 1989.

Warner, Ezra J. *Generals in Gray*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1959; reprint, 1991.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 Previously Listed in the National Register.
 Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
 Designated a National Historic Landmark.
 Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
 Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State Agency: State Historic Sites Section, 109 E. Jones St., Raleigh, NC 27601-2807
 Federal Agency
 Local Government
 University
 Other (Specify Repository):

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Approximately 6,500 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing

A 17 3909320 746460

B 17 3914940 749720

C 17 3915410 744430

D 17 3909160 742540

See Map #4 for UTM references and general boundary on 7.5 min U.S.G.S. Quad Map.

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary is drawn for detail on the Orthophoto maps 2506, 2507, 2508, 2516, 2517, and 2518 for Johnston County, North Carolina.

Beginning at point on the southwest curb of State Route 1009, about 200 feet northwest of Mill Branch Creek bridge, proceed south by southwest 1500 feet to a point on the property line of parcel 02-L-16-016-E. Follow the property line southwest 400 feet to a point, thence, south 1300 feet to a point on the southern property line of parcel R. A. Howell (unknown parcel number), joining property owned by Phillip C. Shaw (unknown parcel number) thence east 650 feet to a point, thence south 1400 feet, following the east boundary of Phillip C. Shaw's property to a point, thence west 700 feet along the southern edge of Shaw's property to a point on the north curb of Shaw's Pond Road, State Route 1136. Follow the north curb of Shaw's Pond Road west 700 feet to a point, thence south 1700 feet along the west boundary of parcel 02-L-16-029-0 to a point, thence east 700 feet to a point on an unnamed creek flowing into Blackman Pond. Follow the northwest bank of the creek approximately 1700 feet to a point where parcel 02-L-17-019-0 line meets the creek, thence west along the northern edge of parcel 02-L-17-019-0 2200 feet to a point, thence south 1800 feet following the parcel line for 200 feet then the west edge of parcel 02-L-17-038-A, to a point on the north bank of the same unnamed creek flowing into Blackman Pond as mentioned above. Follow the creek west/southwest 400 feet to a point, thence, south 3000 feet along the west edge of parcel 02-L-17-037 to a point on the south curb of Battlefield Road, State Route 1190, thence southwest 4200 feet to a point on southwest curb of Mill Creek Church Road, State Route 1188. This point is also where the northern border of Bentonville Battleground State Historic Site, parcel 02-L-18-004-c, meets Mill Creek Church Road. Follow the southwest boundary of Bentonville Battleground, parcel 02-L-18-004-c, 1220 feet southeast, thence southwest 400 feet, thence southeast 800 feet to a point on the south curb of Harper House Road, State Route 1008. Follow the south curb of Harper House Road 3000 feet to a point where the northeast corner of parcel 02-L-18-012-y meets the road, thence southeast 700 feet along the northeast edge of parcel 02-L-18-012 to a point on the east curb of Newton Grove Road, State Route 1192. Proceed east 950 feet to a point on the east boundary of parcel 02-L-18-009-0, thence 300 feet north along the east edge of parcel 02-L-18-009-0 to a point on the southern edge of parcel 02-L-17-030-0, thence east/northeast 1700 feet along the parcel line to a point on the west edge of parcel 02-L-17-031-0, thence north 2000 feet along the parcel line to a point at the northwest corner of parcel 02-L-17-031-0, thence east 2050 feet along the north edge of parcel 02-L-17-031-0 continuing along the north edge of parcel 02-L-17-032-0 to a point at the northeast corner of parcel 02-L-17-032-0, thence north 800 feet along the east edge of parcel 02-L-17-050-0 to a point at the southwest corner of parcel 02-L-17-054-0, thence east 250 feet along the southern edge of parcel 02-L-17-054-0 to a point at the southeast corner of parcel 02-L-17-054-0, thence north 325 feet along the east edge of parcel 02-L-17-054-0, thence east 900 feet along the southern edge of parcels 02-L-17-051-A, 02-L-17-199-0, 02-L-18-199, respectively, to a point at the southeast corner of parcel 02-L-18-199, thence north 1500 feet to a point where

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the northwest corner of parcel 02-M-19-008-A touches the southern edge of parcel 02-L-17-054-A, thence east 1400 feet along the southern edge of parcel 02-L-17-054-A to a point at the southeast corner of the parcel, thence north 850 feet along the eastern edge of parcel 02-L-17-054-A to a point on the southern curb of Harper House Road, State Route 1008, thence east curving northeast along the southern curb of Harper House Road 5824 feet to a point on the east curb of Bentonville Road, State Route 1197, thence north 802 feet along the east curb of the Bentonville Road to a point at the northwest corner of parcel 02-M-19-030-0, thence east 100 feet, thence north 100 feet, thence east 1550 feet following the northern border of parcel 02-M-19-030-0 then the northern edge parcels 02-M-19-031 and 02-M-19-031-A, respectfully, to a point at the northeast corner of parcel 02-M-19-031-A, thence north and then northeast 1900 feet along the southeastern edge of parcel 02-M-18-020-0 to a point at the northeast corner of parcel 02-M-18-020-0, thence west 500 feet along the northern edge of parcel 02-M-18-020-0 to a point where the southeast corner of parcel 02-M-18-030-0 makes contact. Follow the eastern edge of parcel 02-M-18-030-0 north/ northeast 1000 feet, thence west 300 feet, thence north 300 feet to a point on the north curb of Scout Road, State Route 1199, thence west 2400 feet to a point at the southwest corner of parcel 02-M-18-022-0, thence northeast 1750 feet along the western edge of parcel 02-M-18-022-0 to a point at the northwest corner of the parcel, thence west/ northwest 4800 feet to a point, thence west 4100 feet to a point on the eastern edge of parcel 02-L-16-016-0, thence south 200 feet along the eastern edge of parcel 02-L-16-016-0 to a point at the southeast corner of parcel 02-L-16-016-0, thence west 1100 feet along the southern edge of the parcel to the southwest corner, and then slightly more northwest an additional 550 feet beyond to the point of origin.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary was determined by a combination field survey and consultation of existing documentation. The National Historic Landmark (NHL) boundary generally follows the core area of the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission Study for Bentonville Battlefield. The NHL boundary includes all of the core area where major battle events took place and some of the study area where important resources and sites which had an effect on the final outcome of the conflict exist. Property parcel boundaries were used when possible for clarity of the boundary.

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