

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

Mill SPRINGS BATTLEFIELD

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: MILL SPRINGS BATTLEFIELD

Other Name/Site Number: Battle of Logan's Crossroads, Battle of Fishing Creek, Battle of Beech Grove, Battle of Somerset, Kentucky

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Three discontinuous locations Not for publication:\_\_\_

City/Town: Southwest of Somerset, south of Nancy, Kentucky Vicinity:\_\_\_

State: Kentucky County: Pulaski & Wayne Code:199/231 Zip Code:\_\_\_\_\_

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: X
Public-local: X
Public-State:\_\_\_
Public-Federal:\_\_\_

Category of Property
Building(s):\_\_\_
District:\_\_\_
Site: X
Structure:\_\_\_
Object:\_\_\_

Number of Resources within Property
Contributing
3
3

Noncontributing
37 buildings
sites
1 objects
38 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A



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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic: DEFENSE

Sub: BATTLE SITE

Current: AGRICULTURE

Sub: AGRICULTURAL FIELD, STORAGE,  
AGRICULTURAL OUTBUILDING

FUNERARY  
LANDSCAPE  
INDUSTRY

CEMETERY  
PARK, FOREST  
EXTRACTIVE FACILITY

**7. DESCRIPTION**

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: N/A

MATERIALS:

Foundation: N/A  
Walls: N/A  
Roof: N/A  
Other: N/A

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**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

The Mill Springs Battlefield consists of three related sites with integrity of association: the battlefield in Nancy, Kentucky, two Confederate fortifications in Beech Grove on the north side of Lake Cumberland, and those in Mill Springs on the opposite bank. These sites have excellent integrity of setting, feeling, association, and location. The nominated areas, approximately 647.3 acres, are located in two counties at three discontinuous locations. The three areas include: the battlefield in Pulaski County, the fortified encampment in Wayne County, and the fortified ferry landing/mill site at Mill Springs, also in Wayne County.

The Battle of Mill Springs, fought on January 19, 1862, began at midnight in Beech Grove in Wayne County, Kentucky. Confederate soldiers marched nine miles from that encampment to a semi-wooded area about a mile south of present day Nancy, Kentucky. There in the morning hours of January 19, the first decisive battle for Kentucky was fought. A beaten Confederate army retreated back to its fortifications at Beech Grove, leaving Brig. Gen. Felix Zollicoffer and more than 100 others dead on the field. The Rebels were pursued by the Federal forces. The Union Army harassed the Confederates, within the fortifications, with an artillery bombardment. During the night, tired, hungry Confederate troops were ferried across the Cumberland River to Mill Springs, abandoning all of their livestock, artillery, wagons, and even their wounded.

**I. THE BATTLEFIELD**

The Battle of Mill Springs was fought in three discrete locations within the overall boundary of the battlefield. The first battle locus is east of SR 235 and west of Clifty Creek where the Union army formed along an old road approximately 328 yards from the fork of the Mill Springs Road (SR 235) and Kinney's Ferry Road (Roberts Port Road). The two armies clashed along a fairly broad ridge east of the Mill Springs Road (SR 235) bound on the east by Clifty Creek. During this initial fighting, Confederate General Zollicoffer was killed. This caused panic, and the Confederate troops withdrew.

The Confederate retreat and subsequent counterattack brought about the second battle locale. The Confederates had withdrawn into the draw formed by Clifty Creek east of Zollicoffer Park. Once reformed, the Confederate troops attacked. They struck a Union force drawn up in line along a ridge adjacent to SR 761 and running approximately 219 yards east of the intersection of SR 761 and SR 235. The attack failed when a Union regiment slammed into its flank, which was anchored approximately at benchmark 1092. At this point, most of the Confederate army abandoned the fight and started down the road along which they had marched on their advance from the entrenchments at Beech Grove.

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The final phase of the conflict in the battlefield location began at this point. With the bulk of the Confederate army rushing toward Beech Grove, the Confederate reserve formed a line approximately 120 yards south of, and parallel to, an unnamed two track road approximately 328 yards south of Zollicoffer Park, in the vicinity of Fairview Cemetery. This rear guard action held the Union army at bay long enough for the Confederate army to reach Beech Grove unmolested. At this point, the first phase of the battle ended.

**II. THE FORTIFIED ENCAMPMENT**

The final offensive action of the Battle of Mill Springs occurred at Beech Grove, in Wayne County, approximately nine miles from the battlefield in Pulaski County. The area between the battlefield and the encampment is not included in the nomination because there was no confrontation during the Confederate advance or retreat. The area known as Beech Grove is a peninsula formed by a bend in the Cumberland River and White Oak Creek. In the fall and winter of 1861, the Confederate troops crossed the Cumberland River and fortified this narrow neck of land. Following the battle near Logan's Crossroads (now Nancy, Kentucky) the Confederate troops returned to the relatively safe confines of the fortifications. General George H. Thomas's Union army, after a respite, followed the retreating Confederate army and emplaced its artillery on "Moulden's Hill" and fired upon the Southerners. "Moulden's Hill" is a narrow ridge approximately 656 yards north of benchmark 895 from this location. Thomas's artillery harassed the Confederate troops and even shelled the steamboat as she ferried fleeing troops across the river. This was the last offensive action taken as part of the Mill Springs campaign.

Research is being conducted to determine the exact location of historic roads, fortifications, and camp areas. This information is not available for inclusion in this nomination, but could be added as an addendum at such time as research identifies such contributing resources.

**III. FORTIFIED FERRY LANDING/MILL SITE**

In the fall of 1861, Confederate Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston ordered Zollicoffer to move his army from Cumberland Ford to Mill Springs "in order to observe the enemy." Mill Springs was chosen as the initial base of Confederate operations because it was in an agriculturally rich area and because of its proximity to the Cumberland River. The Mill Springs Road that has been a prominent feature in the other two locales terminated here (exact location unknown). A ferry crossed the river and docked below the mill to bring people and goods to Mill Springs (exact location unknown). Zollicoffer fortified a portion of this area before crossing the river and setting up his headquarters at Beech Grove. A mill stands at the site of the Civil War era mill. This mill was constructed many years after the battle and, although listed on the National Register, is not considered to be a contributing resource for the Landmark nomination.

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**JUSTIFICATION****I. THE BATTLEFIELD**

The battle was fought in three discrete locations within an area of approximately 320 acres. The battlefield area is defined generally by SR 235 on the west and a crescent formed by Clifty Creek on the east, to the north by US 80 and to the south by Fairview Cemetery (see above). The battlefield, while less wooded today than in January of 1862, retains much of its rural character. In 1862, Logan's Crossroads was a quiet farming community west of Somerset. The historic maps of the battle show less than ten buildings in the area. Today, there are no extant structures from the Civil War within the boundary of the nomination. In fact, there are some 29 noncontributing structures within the battlefield area. Yet, none of these structures, with the exceptions of the two small oil wells and adjacent oil storage tanks, detracts seriously from the battlefield's integrity of setting, feeling, or location. Neither the wells nor the tanks can be readily seen from the road and one well is mixed in with a complex of farm-related outbuildings. Nancy, Kentucky, today, remains a farming community. Most of the noncontributing structures are farmhouses, barns, and silos. Part of the battlefield is now a commercial orchard; other parts are in pasture, corn, and tobacco, and there is an active cemetery also located in the area.

Nancy, Kentucky, and the nominated land are in every sense a rural farming community as they were in 1862. SR 235 follows the route of the historic Mill Springs Road, with some of the curves having been removed. Kinney's Ferry Road, now known as Roberts Port Road, which forks off to the west of SR 235, retains its historic path.

In addition to the structures on the landscape, SR 761, which forks off SR 235 just North of Zollicoffer Park, did not exist at the time of the battle. It runs down the ridge that the Union army would have occupied during the second phase of the battle. The road is an intrusion, yet the construction of the roadbed generally follows the natural ridge; consequently, the historic landscape is still basically intact and the battlefield's integrity is not adversely compromised.

**II. THE FORTIFIED ENCAMPMENT**

The fortified encampment is the key to understanding the Battle of Mill Springs. This area is a peninsula formed by a bend in the Cumberland River and White Oak Creek, which flows into the Cumberland. The area, sometimes called "Zollicoffer's Den," was fortified and occupied by the Confederate troops during the winter of 1861-1862, and is essential to understanding why and how the battle occurred. All of this area, except the extreme southern end, retains excellent integrity of setting, feeling, association, and location. Development of seasonal lake-front housing and the creation of Lake Cumberland has destroyed the

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integrity of the southernmost portion of the area. The presence of seasonal housing accounts for the disjointed southern boundary of the encampment area. The remaining area is much like the battlefield area in that it retains its rural character. The fortified encampment area is mostly forested with some tobacco. There are no above ground remains of the earthworks constructed by the Confederate army, nor any other extant structures from the period of significance. There are five noncontributing resources in the area; these consist of two barns, a ruined farmhouse, an occupied farmhouse, and a cemetery.

Between November 1861 and January 1862, more than 4,000 officers and men lived at Beech Grove; consequently, the fortified encampment nomination area includes more than Moulde's Hill and the general area of the fortifications. This is due in part to the archeological potential of the site which served as a base of operations for Confederate troops for several months. While the Battle of Mill Springs site is not being nominated under Criterion 6, the fact that soldiers spent several months in the area, coupled with the lack of disturbance at the site, would indicate that there is an archeological potential. Beech Grove is a significant early war site and could add valuable information to the understanding of the Civil War soldiers' life. Long term occupation by military forces should have left an archeological footprint. The exact location of any of the features is not known and will not be known until there is an archeological investigation.

**III. FORTIFIED FERRY LANDING/MILL SITE**

This site is included in the nominated area because it was where the Confederate army initially set up camp. This area was fortified and a portion of the fortification remains on the Corps of Engineers park property. It was also the point to which the Confederate army retreated following its defeat at the battle in Pulaski County. This area is important to fully understand the retreat and the collapse of the Confederate units as an effective fighting force. A portion of the old ferry landing road is visible to the east of the mill site and the Brown-Lanier House stands west of the mill. The mill, the restrooms, and the giftshop do not contribute to the nomination. However, the mill is built on the site of a mill that was there at the time of the battle and subsequent retreat. The historic character of the area as a mill/ferry landing site remains and is interpreted by the Corps of Engineers as such.

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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(s):   VI.   The Civil War  
                  C.    War in the West

Areas of Significance:           Military

Period(s) of Significance:       December 1861 - January 1862

Significant Dates:               January 19, 1862

Significant Person(s):           George H. Thomas

Cultural Affiliation:

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.**

Mill Springs Battlefield is nationally significant in meeting National Historic Landmark criterion 1 as an event, "that [has] made a significant contribution to, and [is] identified with, or that outstandingly represent[s], the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained." The Battle of Mill Springs also meets criterion 2 because it is, "associated importantly with the lives of [a person] nationally significant in the history of the United States."<sup>1</sup>

Mill Springs Battlefield meets criterion 1 because it was an important early victory by Union forces (along with Middle Creek Battlefield, Prestonsburg, Kentucky, which was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1992)<sup>2</sup> which helped secure Kentucky for the Union. The Confederate forces, originally commanded by Brig. Gen. Felix K. Zollicoffer and under the command of Maj. Gen. George B. Crittenden at the time of the conflict, were defeated by Federal troops led by Brig. Gen. George H. Thomas. The significance of this battle is derived both from its timing and from its strategic consequences. It was the first major Union victory of the war following the debacle at 1st Manassas (Bull Run) on July 21, 1861, where a Confederate army humiliated Federal forces near Manassas Junction, Virginia. Other Union setbacks of the summer and fall included: the Battle of Wilson's Creek, Missouri, on August 10, 1861; the siege and subsequent surrender of Lexington, Missouri, on September 20, 1861; the Battle of Ball's Bluff, fought on October 21, 1861, near Leesburg, Virginia; and Belmont, Missouri, fought on November 8, 1861. All of these defeats dispirited the North.<sup>3</sup>

Strategically, Mill Springs was one of a string of Confederate setbacks, preceded by Middle Creek nine days earlier and followed by the Battles at Forts Henry and Donelson, that eventually culminated in the Battle of Shiloh in April of 1862. These events resulted in Union control of Kentucky and most of West Tennessee (see map 6). The Confederate defeat at Mill Springs led to the collapse of the eastern sector of Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston's Confederate defensive line in Kentucky. This setback forced Confederate authorities to alter their western strategy, which had been based upon defending a line stretching from Columbus on the Mississippi River through Forts Henry and

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<sup>1</sup> *Code of Federal Regulations*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), 36, Part 65, 292.

<sup>2</sup> While the action at Middle Creek occurred nine days earlier, it was a smaller engagement and its effect was more of a morale victory for the Federal forces and raised the hopes of the Northern populace.

<sup>3</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 367.

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Donelson and Bowling Green and anchored on Cumberland Gap in the east.

Crittenden's Confederate force, after Mill Springs, was scattered, demoralized, and unavailable for effective action. Albert Sidney Johnston could not gather more than 18,000 men to counter Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's advance on Forts Henry and Donelson and defend the rest of Tennessee.<sup>4</sup> Grant was able to campaign against Forts Henry and Donelson without the threat of Confederate forces advancing from the east. In addition, the lack of an effective Confederate force in eastern Kentucky and Tennessee allowed Brig. Gen. Don Carlos Buell's forces to occupy Nashville and later, join General Grant at Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, the night of April 6, 1862, in time to fight the second day of Shiloh.

The Battle of Mill Springs meets criterion 2 because of the involvement of Brig. Gen. George H. Thomas. For Thomas, Mill Springs was his first battle as the overall commanding general responsible for the plans and execution of his forces. The second (and last) was in 1864 at the Battle of Nashville. Thomas was steadfast, loyal and one of the foremost general officers in the Union army, spending most of the Civil War as a subordinate officer. He participated in the Siege of Corinth and the battles of Perryville, Stone's River, and Chickamauga. He earned the *nom-de-guerre*, Rock of Chickamauga, while holding the Union left flank on Snodgrass Hill at Chickamauga, thus saving the Army of the Cumberland from destruction. Ezra Warner, in *Generals in Blue*, wrote, "his performance in these battles was not surpassed by any subordinate commander in this nation's history."<sup>5</sup> Mill Springs was Thomas' first major test giving him the confidence to command and proving to his fellow officers that this Virginian could command.

## I. BACKGROUND

The adjournment of the Kentucky state legislature in February of 1861 coincided with the formation of the Confederate government in Montgomery, Alabama. The Kentucky lawmakers refused to entertain Governor Beriah Magoffin's call for a secession convention and instead sent delegates to the ill-fated "Peace Conference" in Washington. Although the nation was divided when the legislature reconvened on March 20, 1861, the Commonwealth of Kentucky vowed to take no part in a Civil War. However, three weeks later, the Confederacy brought on a war with the bombardment of Fort Sumter on April 12-13, 1861. On April 15, 1861, as President Lincoln called for 75,000 troops to suppress

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<sup>4</sup> George A. Bruce, "The Donelson Campaign," in *Papers of The Military Historical Society of Massachusetts*, Volume VII (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company), 3-5.

<sup>5</sup> Ezra Warner, *Generals in Blue*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 501.

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the rebellion, Kentucky declared neutrality.<sup>6</sup>

After months of waiting, the Confederacy became the first to move troops into Kentucky. On September 3, 1861, Confederate Gen. Leonidas Polk sent troops north from Tennessee and occupied Columbus, Kentucky and, subsequently, Gen. Ulysses S. Grant rushed an amphibious force up the Ohio River from Cairo, Illinois, and seized Paducah. The actions of the belligerents forced the state to make a stand; Kentucky chose to remain in the Union. Dissatisfied with their state's choice, Southern sympathizers from 68 counties gathered at Russellville in Logan County. The Russellville Convention declared a new Confederate state government and seceded from the Union on November 18, 1861. In December 1861, the Russellville government was recognized by the Confederacy, and Kentucky "officially" became a Confederate state.

With a Confederate state government in place and Albert Sidney Johnston as the commander of the Confederate forces in the West, a defensive line, extending from Columbus on the Mississippi River, through Bowling Green to Pound and Cumberland Gaps in the east, was established. Johnston hoped to hold much of Kentucky and protect the Confederacy's northern borders. Unfortunately for Johnston and the Confederacy, he had too few troops and too much area to secure.<sup>7</sup>

## II. THE CAMPAIGN

To protect the eastern end of the Confederate defensive line, and to guard East Tennessee from invasion, a force under Brig. Gen. Felix K. Zollicoffer marched from Knoxville, Tennessee, entering Kentucky through the Cumberland Gap. Zollicoffer's mission was to relieve the pressure on Johnston's right flank by keeping Brig. Gen. George H. Thomas's army (then being assembled at Camp Dick Robinson located in the southern Bluegrass) occupied. Another force, under the command of Brig. Gen. Humphrey Marshall, marched from Abington, Virginia, through Pound Gap, and down the Big Sandy Valley towards Paintsville and Prestonsburg. Marshall's force met a brigade under the command of Col. James A. Garfield near Prestonsburg, on January 10, 1862, in the battle of Middle Creek.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Lowell H. Harrison, *The Civil War In Kentucky* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1975), 8-10; John S. Bowman, *The Civil War Almanac* (New York, 1983), 51.

<sup>7</sup> Harrison, *Civil War* 11-12 and 20-23.

<sup>8</sup> Henry P. Scalf, *Kentucky's Last Frontier*, (Prestonsburg, KY: Henry P. Scalf, 1966), 295; Thomas L. Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 94-97; John D. Preston, *The Civil War in the Big Sandy Valley of Kentucky*, (Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 1984), 32-37.

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Felix Kirk Zollicoffer, a Tennessean of Swiss extraction, had been a newspaper editor and politician prior to the war. Politically, Zollicoffer had been a Whig, serving three consecutive terms in Congress from 1853-1859. He supported Constitutional Union candidate John Bell in the 1860 election and opposed secession, but went with his state when it left the Union during the late spring of 1861. He had served in the military during the Seminole War.<sup>9</sup>

Brig. Gen. George Henry Thomas, a Virginian, opted to stay in the United States Army after his native state left the Union. He was a career officer, graduating from West Point in 1840, and he fought in the Seminole and Mexican Wars. He was to achieve a well-deserved reputation during the Civil War and was one of only thirteen officers to receive the "Thanks of Congress."<sup>10</sup>

Zollicoffer's army was considerably smaller and not nearly as well equipped as Thomas's. Zollicoffer had between 4,000 and 7,000 troops (depending on how one calculates effectives), and approximately 1,500 were unarmed. Of those under Zollicoffer's command at the Battle of Mill Springs, only a small portion carried percussion cap muskets. The remainder had an assortment of flint locks and shotguns, weapons that were makeshift at best and undependable in wet conditions. Inadequate weapons and the supply logistics faced by Zollicoffer were typical of the Confederate armies in the west during the early stages of the war. The western part of the Confederacy did not enjoy the concern the Davis Government gave to the armies in front of Richmond.<sup>11</sup>

In September 1861, Zollicoffer advanced into Kentucky. He secured and fortified Cumberland Gap. Marching north on the old Wilderness Road, he sent detachments of troops out to break up Union recruiting camps at Barbourville and Laurel Bridge. His plan was to continue to move toward the Bluegrass region along the Wilderness Road. In mid-October, that plan changed. A well-fortified Union army under Brig. Gen. Albin Schoepf blocked the road at Camp Wildcat, near Livingston in Laurel County. Schoepf's well-dug-in force occupied the high ground surrounding the Wilderness Road as it wound through the Rockcastle Hills.

Zollicoffer made several unsuccessful thrusts against the Union lines. After determining that his force was inadequate to

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<sup>9</sup> Scalf, 295; Connelly, 86-88; Stanley F. Horn, *The Army of Tennessee: A Military History*, (New York: Bobbs Merrill Co., 1941), 66-67; Gerald R. McMurtry, "Zollicoffer and the Battle of Mill Springs," *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, Vol. 29 Number 4, 304-305.

<sup>10</sup> Stewart Sifakis, *Who Was Who in the Civil War* (New York: Facts on File, 1988), 650.

<sup>11</sup> McMurtry, "Zollicoffer", 312, Connelly, *Army of Tennessee*, 92-93.

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assault the Federal field works, he withdrew back to Camp Buckner at Cumberland Ford (near present day Pineville, Kentucky). The problems with provisioning an army in the barren country of east Kentucky became all too apparent. If Zollicoffer had stayed at his base at Cumberland Ford, he would have lost the advantages of surprise and choice of ground for a fight, plus the Union army would have grown larger, marching to attack him as he was based in a very pro-Union area. Finally, in November, under orders from Johnston "to observe the enemy," Zollicoffer moved his army to Mill Springs on the south bank of the Cumberland River in Wayne County. This also put Zollicoffer's army 75 miles closer to Johnston's army at Bowling Green.<sup>12</sup>

Zollicoffer fortified the south bank of the river in late 1861 and made his headquarters in Mill Springs. Local lore names at least two standing structures as "Zollicoffer's headquarters," the Brown-Lanier House on the banks adjacent to the site of the old mill, and West-Metcalf House (listed in the National Register) about a mile east of Mill Springs. It is possible that the general occupied both of these houses, at least briefly, while the main body of his army camped in the Wayne County hamlet. Both houses were said to have been utilized as hospitals following the battle.

The choice of Mill Springs as a base of operations for the Confederate army was no accident. Wayne County had the advantage of being on the Cumberland River where supplies could be brought in by steamboat, and the county had fertile farmland that produced an abundance of corn and hogs. With the river as a buffer and a reliable source of supplies, Zollicoffer was in a good position to defend the Confederate eastern flank.<sup>13</sup>

### III. THE PREPARATION

In the winter of 1861, Zollicoffer's troops settled in at Mill Springs. Zollicoffer had hoped that by positioning himself on the Cumberland he could be supplied more readily by river from Nashville, rather than having to rely on the overland route from Knoxville. The position of these defenses would have allowed Zollicoffer's command to watch the river and keep an eye on any offensive movements via the south bank.<sup>14</sup>

Zollicoffer did not propose to remain inactive, and determined to contest Federal activities in Pulaski County to the north. He

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<sup>12</sup> McMurtry, "Zollicoffer", 304-305; Horn, *The Army of Tennessee*, 67 and Connelly, *Army of Tennessee*, 88.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis Collins, *History of Kentucky Volume II*, (Covington, Kentucky, 1874), 753-754.

<sup>14</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Atlas* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1882), plate 6 number 3 (hereafter cited as O.R.); Connelly, *Army of Tennessee*, 89-90.

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crossed the Cumberland with most of his army and fortified a narrow strip of land between White Oak Creek and a bend in the Cumberland near a small hamlet known as Beech Grove. This maneuver positioned his army where its line of retreat could be blocked by the river. Zollicoffer's apparent tactical error was calculated because he saw his primary goal as protecting Johnston's right flank from being enveloped by Thomas. If the Confederate army remained on the south bank, it could only watch the Federal build-up and run the risk of the Union army slipping past him somewhere between Cumberland Gap and Mill Springs. If he crossed the river and put his force on the northern bank, he had an opportunity to strike Thomas before the latter could concentrate his forces.<sup>15</sup>

The logistical and political problems of the Confederate forces in the west caught up with the troops in and around Mill Springs in the winter of 1861-1862. Jefferson Davis appointed Maj. Gen. George B. Crittenden, a heavy drinking Kentuckian, overall commander of the district. Davis hoped to send Crittenden into Kentucky with ten regiments to reestablish a Confederate presence in the state. Davis had no troops to send with the Kentuckian, nor to reinforce Zollicoffer, who had been awaiting additional troops since his arrival in south-central Kentucky in November of 1861. Upon assuming command, Crittenden ordered Zollicoffer to move his army back to the south bank of the Cumberland. This order dashed Zollicoffer's hopes of smashing Thomas. Zollicoffer chose to ignore Crittenden's command. He stayed put; the Cumberland River had flooded and there were not enough rafts to safely ferry the army across. Zollicoffer awaited the arrival of Crittenden on the northern shore of the Cumberland River.<sup>16</sup>

#### IV. THE BATTLE

George Bibb Crittenden was the son of U.S. Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky. He was a native of Kentucky and a graduate of West Point, Class of 1832. On June 10, 1861, he resigned as lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army and he was commissioned a brigadier general in the Confederate Army. Upon his promotion to major general, he was given command of the Department of East Tennessee, which included parts of East Kentucky.<sup>17</sup>

Crittenden arrived at Mill Spring on January 2, 1862. He found his army posted on both sides of the river. Occupying the entrenchments below Mill Springs, on the south bank of the Cumberland, were the Seventeenth, Twenty-eighth, and Thirty-seventh Tennessee regiments, the First battalion Tennessee cavalry, two companies of the Third battalion Tennessee cavalry, and four pieces of artillery. Across the river at Beech Grove,

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<sup>15</sup> Connelly, *Army of Tennessee*, 90-91.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 96-97.

<sup>17</sup> Sifakis, *Who Was Who*, 151-152.

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the Confederates had assembled the Fifteenth Mississippi, Sixteenth Alabama, Nineteenth, Twentieth, Twenty-fifth, and Twenty-ninth Tennessee Regiments, two battalions of Tennessee cavalry, two independent cavalry companies, and twelve pieces of artillery, altogether a force of 4,000 men.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, General Thomas's army left Lebanon, Kentucky on December 31, 1861. When Thomas arrived at Logan's Crossroads (present day Nancy, Kentucky) on January 17, 1862, he was within ten miles of the Confederates at Beech Grove. His effectives there consisted of the Fourth and Tenth Kentucky, Tenth Indiana, Ninth and Fourteenth Ohio, Second Minnesota, Wolford's First Kentucky Cavalry, plus two batteries of the First Light Ohio Artillery and the Ninth Ohio battery. Three regiments from Schoepf's command based at Somerset, the Twelfth Kentucky regiment and First and Second Tennessee Regiments, were added to his force, bringing the total to approximately 8,000 troops. Unlike the Confederate troops, the Union army was well armed.

Thomas and Schoepf had not brought all of their troops together at Logan's Crossroads. Most of Schoepf's division had crossed Fishing Creek, west of Somerset, and the Federal forces stood ready to eliminate the Confederate threat to the area and open up an invasion route to East Tennessee. This is what Zollicoffer had hoped to prevent when he moved his army across the river.<sup>19</sup>

While the Federal troops made no threatening movements toward the opposing forces south of them, it would only be a matter of time before Thomas seized the initiative and attacked the Southern army. Crittenden held a council of war on January 18 with his brigade and regimental commanders to decide whether to make an attack on Thomas. Since their current position was untenable against a concerted assault and the possibilities of retreat were hindered by the river, the council decided that the only chance to defeat Thomas was to strike him at once. The Confederates hoped to strike Thomas before he could concentrate his entire force at Logan's Crossroads.<sup>20</sup>

Crittenden, unaware that a portion of Schoepf's force had already joined Thomas at Logan's Crossroads, ordered his army to head north at midnight. The march of some nine miles was hindered by cold wet conditions that turned the roads into quagmires, dampening the spirits and the gunpowder of the Confederate

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<sup>18</sup> Connelly, *Army of Tennessee*, 97; McMurtry, "Zollicoffer," 315; Gen. Clement A. Evans, editor, *Confederate Military History, Volume IX*, (Secaucus, NY: n.d.) reprint edition, 54.

<sup>19</sup> Alferd H. Guernsey and Henry M. Alden, *Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War*, (New York: 1866), 223-224.

<sup>20</sup> Kelly, R. M., "Holding Kentucky for the Union," Volume I, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, (Secaucus, New Jersey: 1990), 387.

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troops, who encountered the Union pickets at 6 A.M. on January 19, 1862.<sup>21</sup>

Crittenden's troops were organized in two brigades with a small reserve. General Zollicoffer commanded the First brigade which had a cavalry screen led by Captains Saunders and Bledsoe, followed by the Fifteenth Mississippi, Nineteenth, Twentieth, and Twenty-fifth Tennessee, and four guns of Rutledge's battery. Brig. Gen. William H. Carroll commanded the Second brigade that consisted of the Seventeenth, Twenty-eighth, and Twenty-ninth Tennessee regiments, plus two guns of McClung's battery. The Sixteenth Alabama and two cavalry battalions made up the reserve.

Crittenden's cavalry made initial contact with elements of Wolford's cavalry just after sunrise about nine miles from their encampment. Wolford's men fell back on two companies of the Tenth Indiana. These elements were eventually forced to retire from the force of the Confederate advance. The Fourth Kentucky and the brigade battery were ordered to the front by Union Col. Mahlon Manson, Colonel of the Tenth Kentucky. Zollicoffer deployed his brigade in line of battle generally to the right of the Mill Springs road, with elements of the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Tennessee on the left of the road. Zollicoffer's brigade struck the Fourth Kentucky, portions of the Tenth Indiana, and Wolford's cavalry (see map 1) "near where the roads fork leading to Somerset." The Union soldiers were just rising to answer roll call as the sounds of musket-fire caused them to rapidly form into line.<sup>22</sup>

The Fourth Kentucky, under the command of Col. Speed S. Fry, moved at the double quick and had taken position,

along a fence in the edge of the woods, with his right resting near the edge of the Mill Springs road. In front...was an open field, across which the enemy were advancing from the shelter of woodland on the opposite side. A ravine ran through the open field parallel to Fry's front, heading near the road on his right, with steep sides in his front, but sloping gradually beyond his left.<sup>23</sup>

The Confederate advance pressed hard in the front of the Fourth Kentucky and threatened to overlap their right flank. Additional Union soldiers came to the front as the Second Minnesota and Ninth Ohio arrived on the scene. During the confusion of the battle, General Zollicoffer rode up to the Nineteenth Tennessee and ordered it to cease fire, as he was convinced that it was firing upon Southern soldiers. The general then advanced toward the troops being fired upon by the Tennessee regiment and ordered

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<sup>21</sup> McMurtry, "Zollicoffer," 308.

<sup>22</sup> O.R., 106 and 79-89; Kelley, 387-388.

<sup>23</sup> Kelly, 387-388.



these troops also to cease firing (see map 2). General Zollicoffer was mistaken; his troops had been firing at the Fourth Kentucky, a Union regiment. During the confusion, the Confederate general was killed by Federal troops. Zollicoffer's death caused a panic among some of the Tennessee troops, and the Confederate line fell back.<sup>24</sup>

General Thomas arrived on the field and immediately began organizing the Union troops. In response to the disorganization following Zollicoffer's death, Crittenden brought Carroll's brigade forward and ordered a general advance (see map 3). To counter this, Thomas moved Kenney's Battery to the left of the Fourth Kentucky and the Twelfth Kentucky to the left of Kenney's Battery. In addition, the First and Second Tennessee Regiments and Wetmore's Battery were placed to the left of the Twelfth Kentucky. Realizing that there was minimal threat to his left flank, Fry had moved two companies to the threatened right flank. In addition, Thomas moved the Tenth Indiana in position to cover the right flank of the Fourth Kentucky. The Ninth Ohio was placed to the right of the Tenth Indiana, and the Second Minnesota moved in behind the line in a reserve position. As the fighting continued to escalate, the ammunition of the Tenth Indiana and the Fourth Kentucky began to dwindle. The Second Minnesota moved up under severe fire providing much needed relief to the two regiments. Thomas' entire line managed to advance against the stiff resistance of the Confederates (see map 4).<sup>25</sup>

The death of Zollicoffer and the continued heavy fighting adversely affected the moral of the Confederate troops. This was perhaps the hottest part of the battle; both lines were raked with heavy fire and hand to hand fighting broke out along a fence line. A bayonet charge by the Ninth Ohio into the Confederate left demoralized the Southern line, which began a general retreat toward Beech Grove (see map 5). The immediate Federal pursuit was checked by the efforts of the Sixteenth Alabama. The Sixteenth made a stand along what is now called Last Stand Hill. This allowed the beaten Confederates to retire within the fortifications at Beech Grove.<sup>26</sup>

## V. CONCLUSION

The battle lasted less than four hours and pursuit of the beaten Confederates was not prompt. After a respite to replenish his ammunition, Thomas followed the Confederates. His army arrived opposite the Southern fortifications at Beech Grove about 4 P.M., and Thomas deployed his troops in line of battle at Moulden's Hill, a height commanding Beech Grove, and ordered his artillery

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 388-389; O.R., 80 and 106-107.

<sup>25</sup> Kelley, 389.

<sup>26</sup> O.R., 107 and 80; McMurtry, "Zollicoffer," 311; Col. James Edmonds Saunders, *Early Settlers of Alabama Part I*, (New Orleans: 1899), 188.

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to shell the Confederate positions. Standart and Wetmore's batteries bombarded the Confederate earthworks while Kenney's battery fired upon the ferry crossing. The bombardment continued until dark. During the night, the Confederates retreated across the swollen river after abandoning their supplies, artillery, mules, and wounded. Crittenden's losses in battle had been about 500, but the retreat had cost him much of his army. Thomas lost less than 300 men, and, in the process, had routed Crittenden's army and, consequently, Johnston's right flank.<sup>27</sup>

The Battle of Mill Springs not only caused the defeat of the Confederate army at Logan's Crossroads, but left the Confederate forces at Bowling Green open to attack. Strategically, their flank had been turned. While Albert Sidney Johnston's forces stood guard along the Barren River, and guarded direct approaches to the Nashville area, the Union army had a toehold on the Cumberland River northeast of Nashville. On February 6, Confederate Fort Henry on the Tennessee River surrendered and on February 16, Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River was captured. Confederate setbacks at Middle Creek, Mill Springs, and the capitulations of Forts Henry and Donelson forced the Confederate commanders to withdraw their troops from Columbus and Bowling Green. The withdrawal of Confederate forces left both Kentucky and most of west Tennessee to Union forces. Apart from victories at the river forts in Western Tennessee, the outcome at Mill Springs opened up the floodgates for a Union sweep deep into Middle and West Tennessee and the loss of Nashville.

Besides the military advantage gained at Mill Springs, Federal forces increased the morale boost for the North begun at Middle Creek. This was the first major battle in which the Union armies had since the disaster at 1st Manassas the previous summer a clear cut victory. Zollicoffer was dead, and Crittenden's army was in disarray and in retreat. There was no way for the South to put a good face on this battle; the Northern press, flush with the news of Garfield's triumph at Middle Creek fought nine days earlier, played the victory for all it was worth. Thomas and Mill Springs grabbed the headlines and a Southern army was on the run.

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<sup>27</sup> Connelly, *Army of Tennessee*, 99; McMurtry, "Zollicoffer," 311; Kelley, 391.

**ORDER OF BATTLE<sup>28</sup>**  
**Union**

Grig. Gen. George H. Thomas . . . . . *Commanding*

Second Brigade . . . . . Col. Mahlon D. Manson  
 Tenth Indiana . . . . . Lt.-Col. William C. Kise  
 Fourth Kentucky . . . . . Col. Speed S. Fry  
 Tenth Kentucky . . . . . Col. John M. Harlan  
 Fourteenth Ohio . . . . . Col. James B. Steedman

Third Brigade . . . . . Col. Robert L. McCook  
 Second Minnesota . . . . . Col. Horatio P. Van Cleve  
 Ninth Ohio . . . . . Maj. Gustave Kammerling

Twelfth Brigade . . . . . Acting Brig. Gen. Samuel P. Carter  
 Twelfth Kentucky . . . . . Col. William A. Hoskins  
 First Tennessee . . . . . Col. Robert K. Byrd  
 Second Tennessee . . . . . Col. J. P. T. Carter  
 First Kentucky Cavalry . . . . . Col. Frank Wolford

Artillery:  
 Battery B, First Ohio . . . . . Capt. William E. Standart  
 Battery C, First Ohio . . . . . Capt. Dennis Kenney, Jr.  
 Ninth Ohio Battery . . . . . Capt. Henry S. Wetmore

Camp Guard:  
 Michigan Engineers and Mechanics;  
 Co. D, F, and K . . . . . Lt. Col. K. A. Hunton  
 Thirty-eighth Ohio, Co. A . . . . . Capt. Charles Greenwood

**Confederate**

Maj. Gen. George B. Crittenden . . . . . *Commanding*

First Brigade . . . . . Brig. Gen. F. K. Zollicoffer  
 Fifteenth Mississippi . . . . . Lt. Col. E. C. Walthall  
 Nineteenth Tennessee . . . . . Col. D. H. Cummings  
 Twentieth Tennessee . . . . . Col. Joel A. Battle  
 Twenty fifth Tennessee . . . . . Col. S. S. Stanton  
 Tennessee Battery . . . . . Capt. A. M. Rutledge  
 Independent Co. Tenn. Cavalry . . . . . Capt. W. S. Bledsoe  
 Independent Co. Tenn. Cavalry . . . . . Capt. T. C. Sanders

Second Brigade . . . . . Brig. Gen. William H. Carroll  
 Sixteenth Alabama . . . . . Col. William B. Wood  
 Seventeenth Tennessee . . . . . Lt. Col. T. C. H. Miller  
 Twenty eighth Tennessee . . . . . Col. J. P. Murray  
 Twenty ninth Tennessee . . . . . Col. Samuel Powell  
 Tennessee Battery . . . . . Capt. Hugh L. W. McClung  
 Fourth Battalion Tennessee Cavalry . . . . . Lt. Col. B. M. Branner

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<sup>28</sup> Kelley, 392.

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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
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other (Specify Repository):

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: 647.3 Acres

UTM REFERENCES: Zone Easting Northing

A	16	700200	4104080	(Battlefield)
B	16	701200	4104650	
C	16	701890	4103320	
D	16	701310	4102230	
A	16	696720	4092730	(Fortified Encampment)
B	16	698070	4092220	
C	16	697470	4090670	
D	16	696290	4091230	
A	16	607700	4089980	(Fortified Ferry Landing/Mill Site)
B	16	697820	4089890	
C	16	697700	4089550	
D	16	697350	4089690	

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## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

**I. THE BATTLEFIELD**

(see USGS Delmer Quad, 7.5 minute topographic map)

The Mill Springs Battlefield was confined to an area of approximate 320 acres, located along a series of ridges and hills that are mostly east of SR 235 (the Mill Springs Road) and west of Clifty Creek. The conflict began and came to a close on the Mill Springs Road (SR 235) just north of the present-day site of Fairview Cemetery. It was here that Zollicoffer's brigade encountered the Union pickets at dawn to open the battle, and here the Confederate rear guard held off Federal pursuit long enough for the Rebel army to escape. The area is locally known as "Last Stand Hill."

The boundary of this nominated property is based on the depiction of the battlefield in historical maps and the after action reports found in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. The northern boundary of the battlefield segment of the Battle of Mill Springs begins just south of Nancy, Kentucky on the Roberts Port Road, approximately 276 feet west of where an unnamed seasonal stream crosses under it. The seasonal stream bed becomes the northern boundary on the east side of the road, and it follows the stream bed until it terminates. From the ridge nose where the stream stops, the boundary continues along the next ridge over and then becomes a line that arcs to the east approximately 1,300 feet until it intersects a farm pond. The northern edge of the farm pond becomes the boundary which then becomes a seasonal tributary of Clifty Creek. The boundary of the battlefield segment follows this seasonal tributary of Clifty Creek. It follows the stream bed southeast until the main portion of the stream forks. At the fork, the boundary follows the contour of the south fork nearly due west for about 92 yards, then it swings south bisecting a ridge line. From here the boundary runs southwest passing west of two unnamed seasonal drainages of Clifty Creek. From here the boundary cuts diagonally southwest across a series of contours that are part of "Last Stand Hill." The boundary generally follows the 1100 foot contour line, near the base of the hill, until it intersects SR 235. From this point, an arbitrary boundary is drawn west-northwest approximately 900 feet until it intersects with an unnamed two-track road. From here, a line is drawn approximately 1650 feet north-northwest to a point where it intersects SR 761. From that point, the line continues for approximately 2520 feet north-northwest until it intersects Roberts Port Road, at its point of origin, completing the boundary.

**II. THE FORTIFIED ENCAMPMENT**

(see USGS Mill Springs Quad, 7.5 minute topographic map)

The fortified encampment is approximately 320 acres. It is bounded on the north by a line running east-southeast from a point on a bend in White Oak Creek. The line intersects Lake Cumberland at a point approximately 2700 feet east of White Oak

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Creek. The boundary follows the bluff line above the lake for approximately 3399 feet south to a point, thence, generally southwest about 825 feet to a spot in a cleared field due east of a house at the end of an unnamed two-track road. Here the boundary drops due south approximately 690 feet to a point along ridge line north of a road where seasonal houses have been constructed. The boundary follows the ridges in an southwesterly direction to a point adjacent to a small pond near the Mill Springs Road. From here the boundary goes due south to the banks of the lake. From this point the boundary follows the lake 549 feet east to a point adjacent to a small inlet, from the lake the boundary zig-zags first north approximately 273 feet to a point and then east about 420 feet to a point. The eastern edge of Mill Springs Road becomes the boundary for approximately 576 feet at a point adjacent to a small depression, thence due west for approximately 825 feet roughly paralleling a ridge line before turning north. Here the boundary runs north northwest to the banks of White Oak Creek, then the boundary follows the creek back to the point of origin.

**III. FORTIFIED FERRY LANDING/MILL SITE**

(see USGS Mill Springs Quad, 7.5 minute topographic map)

Beginning at a point at the northern most point of the finger of land jutting into Lake Cumberland, proceed east, thence south, thence east, thence northeast approximately 1500 feet to a point; thence southeast 200 feet to a point on the 800 foot contour; thence southwest and west following the 800 foot contour approximately 1700 feet to a point; thence north approximately 200 feet to a point on the southern shoreline of Lake Cumberland; thence east, and then north along the shoreline approximately 1000 feet to the point of origin. The boundary roughly follows the boundary of the Corps of Engineers park.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:**

The boundaries circumscribe the areas associated with the battle action, associated troop movements during the battle, and encampments in accord with documentation of the engagement.

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**INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS**

## FOR ALL PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographer: Joseph E. Brent  
Negative Location: Kentucky Heritage Council  
300 Washington St., Frankfort, KY  
Date Taken: January 19, 1992

## PHOTOGRAPH NUMBER AND VIEW ELEVATION

- 1-8 Panorama of general battlefield area looking south from National Cemetery, panning clockwise from east. Note houses and farm outbuildings; these are typical of noncontributing structures in the nominated area.
- 9-14 Panorama of general battlefield area looking north from "Last Stand Hill," panning clockwise from west; again, note noncontributing structures and Cemetery.
- 15 The Mill Springs Ferry Road at the Corps of Engineers park in Mill Springs, Kentucky looking north.
- 16 The Mill Springs Mill at the Corps of Engineers park in Mill Springs, Kentucky looking generally south.