

Reenactor Information for the 2016 Perryville Battlefield Reenactment

These are our guiding principles for everyreenactment and living history held at Perryville Battlefield. This is why we do what we do.

Perryville Battlefield's Mission

Perryville Battlefield is a nationally significant Civil War site. Although Confederate forces were victorious on the battlefield at Perryville, the Rebels eventual evacuation of the state forever lost Kentucky's resources and men for the Confederacy. The Confederate loss of Kentucky along with Lee's loss at Antietam set the stage for Abraham Lincoln to change the cause and course of the war. We strive to educate the visiting public on the key role that Perryville played in the Civil War. The battle would settle Kentucky's allegiance as well as help to define national politics which forever changed our nation.

Recreating small sections of the engagement here at Perryville is one form of interpretation used by Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site to fulfill its mission of preserving and interpreting history.

The following information will answer many of your questions regarding the upcoming 2016 event. If you have further questions you may email joan.house@ky.gov or call 859-332-8631 and staff will be able to assist you.

Perryville 2016

What is happening in 2016?

Perryville Battlefield has a long and successful track record of hosting some of the best reenactments in recent memory. We are again hosting another large reenactment in 2016.

The event will take place on October 7-9, 2016. There will be an all day unscripted tactical on Friday, a sunrise battle and "The Cornfield" on Saturday. The "Fight for the Bottom's Farm" occurs on Sunday afternoon. (Detailed battle descriptions are included in the information on this page.)

How can I participate?

Please look over the participation standards and information. It is arranged as either U.S. or C.S. and then by each military branch. Civilian guidelines are also listed. *For example if you are Union Infantry you simply go to the U.S. Guidelines and then to the U.S. Infantry Guidelines.* Once you have reviewed them and they are acceptable to you - then you are invited to register for the event. This can be done either electronically or by mail in registration.

Who can participate and where will we camp?

Everyone who has an impression that meets the guidelines may participant either as a military or civilian reenactor? You may participate with a reenactment unit, mess or as an individual. There will be camping areas for campaigners, fixed military camps, and an authentic civilian area. There will be a mixed camp for civilians and military camping together. There is no modern camping on the park.

Why are your guidelines and standards the way they are?

Perryville Battlefield is a National Historic Landmark. The battle scenarios will be conducted on protected lands. It is a must that each participant is mindful of where they are and what an honor it is to be able to utilize the land. Every effort will be made to maintain historic authenticity throughout the event.

How much is registration?

Registration is \$12.00 if paid on or before December 31, 2015. \$20.00 from January 1, 2015 to September 20, 2016. Under 12 no fee. Ages 12 – 15 through December 31, 2015 is \$6.00. From January 1, 2015 – September 20, 2016 is \$20.00.

Will you take walk-ons?

No - Due to the nature of the event we cannot permit walk-ons.

What is my registration money used for?

All reenactor registration goes to our friends group and will be used for interpretation and preservation efforts on the park. In 2014 the reenactor registration fee was used to finish the split rail fence along the Dixville Crossroads. The Kentucky Department of Parks provides the logistical needs for the reenactors and park visitors (porta-potties, firewood, water, etc.)

Who is hosting the event?

The Kentucky Department of Parks is hosting the event. The military organizations that are responsible to the Kentucky Department of Parks are the Western Federal Blues, and the Southern Division. They successfully planned and executed the 150th Anniversary Event and we are pleased to have them put forth the time, trouble and expense to help us raise much needed preservation funding for the battlefield. Friend's President Chad Greene is the reenactor coordinator and he can be reached at chadgreene104@hotmail.com.

Why should I attend?

You will be on the ground upon which the armies of North and South engaged to determine the destiny of Kentucky! Your money will go for preservation! We have an exemplary track record of hosting events! Your military leadership is experienced and their primary responsibility is to you and making sure you have an outstanding time while representing and honoring those who fought at Perryville!

What is new for 2016?

The H.P. Bottoms Farm will be used during 2016. This ground has not been used since the original battle and we are very grateful to the Civil War Trust for providing us with this opportunity.

What are the scenarios?

It is very easy to plan the scenarios for Perryville. The generals wrote them 150 plus years ago. The park historian has each army's movement broken down into 15 minute increments and the scenarios will be scripted to those movements.

Saturday, October 8, 2016
2:00PM

This scenario simulates the events that took place at approximately 2:00 PM on Wednesday, October 8th, 1862. While General Daniel Donelson's brigade was moving forward into attack position, Brigadier General William R. Terrill's Union Brigade was in the process of forming their line on the "Open Knob". Maney's Brigade, assisted by Wharton's Cavalry, attacked with vigor, rolling over Terrill's regiments as they arrived on the field piecemeal. Union Brigadier General James S. Jackson, the Commander of the 10th Division was killed on the open knob. The first Union position on the Open Knob was overrun and the Confederates moved up their artillery as their infantry line moved forward into the cornfield. Here, the Confederates met Colonel John Starkweather's veteran brigade. Starkweather's only new regiment, the 21st Wisconsin, was positioned in the cornfield when the Confederates attacked. They were quickly overwhelmed, losing all their field officers. The retreating Confederates were pressed across the Dixville Road and a Hand-to-hand fight erupted on the front slope in front of Starkweather's cannon. The Union forces were driven from the hill, but regained it in a counter-attack. General Terrill was also killed on the reverse slope of "Starkweather Hill". With the deaths of General Jackson, General Terrill, and Colonel Webster, the Union 10th Division lost all its commanders. This was the only time in the Civil War that this happened to a Division in a single battle.

The corn planted in the cornfield is an heirloom corn breed, developed in Wisconsin in 1847. This breed of corn, Wisconsin Red Dent, chosen and planted by the Friends of Perryville was done to honor the Wisconsin regiments involved in the Battle of Perryville.

Bayonet thrusts and blows from the butts of our guns crashed on all sides. We would drive them back a few yards, then we would in turn be driven. The very leaden hail, like rain-drops, and as thick, was poured into our very faces, fairly hurling us back.

– Sam Watkins, 1st Tennessee Infantry

I did not go far, however, before a musket or rifle ball struck me in my left leg just below the calf, breaking it, and passing clear through. I of course fell, and that finished my fighting. Shortly afterward, the rebels passed me by. One of them cut off my cartridge box and took it away from me. The shot and shell flew thick over my head as I lay there, making it very unsafe."

– Josiah Ayre, 105th Ohio Volunteer Infantry

The 79th [PA] and 24th [IL] were all enveloped in smoke; the 1st Wisconsin I could not see on account of the corn. I looked for the front. All at once I saw a rebel flag, that is, the upper part of it above the cornstalks and not far away either. I sat down on my right knee and said as loud as I could: 'Boys be ready! They are coming!' They got on their knees; some looked forward, some back at me. Instinctively I yelled: 'Why don't we fire?' I looked to the right, [the] Colonel was not there; I looked to the left, [the] Major was not there. I leveled my rifle at some butternut colored jacked which I saw among the stalks. Instantly the Company followed suit. The Rebs staggered a little and in their turn saluted."

– John Henry Otto, 21st Wisconsin Infantry

Union Regiments Portrayed:

105th Ohio Volunteer Infantry
21st Wisconsin Infantry
US Artillery - Stone's 1st KY Battery
US Cavalry – 2nd Kentucky Cavalry

1st Tennessee
6th Tennessee
9th Tennessee
27th Tennessee
41st Georgia
CS Artillery - Turner's Mississippi Battery
CS Cavalry - 1st Kentucky Cavalry

Confederate Regiments Portrayed:

The Fight for Bottom's Barn
Sunday, October 9, 2016
1:00PM

This scenario simulates the events that took place at approximately 3:00 PM on Wednesday, October 8th, 1862. Since about 10:00 in the morning, William H. Lytle's brigade had taken up position on the right flank of Union 1st Corps commanded by General Alexander M. McCook. The 3rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry, supported by the 15th Kentucky infantry, were positioned in Henry P. Bottom's barn yard overlooking Henry Bottom's House. They were on the extreme right flank of 1st Corps. Although arrayed in battle formation, they didn't expect to do battle that day. They believed that, as had been the case for the last week, the Confederates were retreating to the northeast, towards Harrodsburg. Since there appeared little threat to their front, another regiment, the 42nd Indiana, was sent forward to the semi-dry bed of Doctor's Creek to rest, boil some coffee, and fill their empty canteens in the drought-stricken area. Suddenly, the calm was broken by a fusillade of Confederate artillery shot and shell landing all around. Soon after, two heavily supported Confederate Infantry brigades came out of the woods and attacked towards the 3rd Ohio and the 15th Kentucky, driving the hapless 42nd Indiana in a panic from the creek bed. The Confederates had problems too. Bushrod R. Johnson's Confederate brigade was assigned to attack this area. The Confederates became mixed and disorganized by the cliffs along the creek, just to the north of the road as well as other terrain features. At the same time, another Confederate brigade under the command of Daniel W. Adams was approaching the area from the southeast. When these two brigades collided where the road crosses the creek, there was extra confusion causing them to fire at each other, both brigades thinking the other was the enemy. This was soon worked out and soon both Johnson and Adams began their coordinated attack on the 3rd Ohio and the 15th Kentucky. There were just over 1,000 Union soldiers in the barn yard, being attacked on three sides by almost 3,500 veteran Confederates. As the 3rd Ohio was desperately trying to hold the line, Confederate artillery fire caught Henry Bottom's barn on fire. The strong southerly wind blew the smoke right up the Union battle line. Many wounded from the 3rd Ohio were too weak to pull themselves out of the barn and perished in the flames. Not only was the barn on fire, but the drought-starved vegetation on the whole hillside was also in flames. The battle lines were only 60 yards apart. The Confederates were protected by a stone wall, but the 3rd Ohio was protected only by a post and rail fence. The 3rd Ohio held the line. All the time, messengers from the 15th Kentucky were offering to advance from their reserve position and relieve the 3rd Ohio on the firing line. After about 30 minutes of horrendous fire, the 3rd Ohio then acquiesced to the wishes of the Kentuckians and withdrew. The 15th Kentucky then held the line behind the post and rail fence, the smoke from the burning barn still choked and blinded them. After about another 30 minutes, the 15th Kentucky was forced back when some of Daniel Adam's men, using the creek for cover, positioned themselves behind the Yankees. Bushrod Johnson's supporting brigade, commanded by Patrick Cleburne, at about the same time, broke the Union positions more towards the north, forcing the entire Union line in that area to crumble and fall back. The Confederates forced the Union soldiers back another third of a mile west to the Dixville Crossroads, where darkness ended the battle. The two Union regiments suffered almost 400 casualties (40%).

Our line was steadfastly maintained until the barn on our right, was fired by a shell from the enemy's batteries, and in a few minutes the heat became so intense that my right was compelled to fall back. After rallying we were relieved by the Fifteenth Kentucky, Colonel Curran Pope, and our ammunition being nearly exhausted, we retired to the bottom of the hill. Soon after I sent Companies A, D, and F to act in conjunction with two companies of the Fifteenth Kentucky in endeavoring to hold a fence which ran along the side of a field in which we had been fighting and perpendicular to our former line, but the fire of the enemy's battery, combined with that of his infantry, was so deadly that these men were again ordered to retire.

- Colonel John Beatty, 3rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry

The firing of the regiment was kept up with overwhelming effect, and we had succeeded in driving the enemy entirely behind the stone fence. We saw them beginning to file around our right, but our ammunition was exhausted, and the sun was down, and the enemy had passed to our rear in the fields on our left, so I faced the regiment about and marched it in good order to the foot of the hill where I united with the Third Ohio and filed out into the road and marched back, and coming to the same place I had occupied in the morning, I turned them in there to rest themselves, and was placing them below the hill, for the brow was raked by cannon from both sides, but General Rousseau rode up and desired them to be placed on the brow. I immediately faced the regiment about and marched it to the top and the hill and made it lie down.

– Colonel Curran Pope, 15th Kentucky Infantry

We were by a small post-and-rail fence which had taken fire from the burning barn. It was falling on our dead, and the kind-hearted rebel captain removed them and put the fire out. I was a prisoner, with my left arm half torn off.

- Private A.J. Hearld, 3^d Ohio Volunteer Infantry

Three or four times the colors would fall, but were no sooner down than they were raised again, by other hands. Myself and three others were trying to shoot through a hole in the wall, and we were in each other's way. So I told them to do the loading and I would do the shooting, and thus we continued until the enemy fled. I felt quite safe behind that wall.

– W.C. Gipson, 17th Tennessee, Johnson's Brigade

The enemy's fire upon my regiment was heavy and incessant, but being well protected it suffered but little, while it delivered its fire with coolness and precision. The engagement was thus continued until the enemy abandoned his position and our ammunition was exhausted. By your order I then detached a company and sent it back for ammunition, but before its return I was ordered by a staff officer, unknown to me, to move forward over the hill upon which one of our batteries was afterward placed. I had bayonets fixed and moved forward.

- Colonel A.B. Marks, 17th Tennessee Infantry, Johnson's Brigade

Union Regiments Portrayed:

15th Kentucky Volunteer Infantry
3rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry
42nd Indiana Volunteer Infantry
US Artillery - Simonson's 5th Indiana
Battery
US Cavalry - 9th Pennsylvania Cavalry

Confederate Regiments Portrayed:

17th Tennessee
37th Tennessee
5th Confederate
13th Louisiana
20th Louisiana
CS Artillery - 5th Company, Washington
Artillery Battalion "Slocumb's Battery"
CS Cavalry - 1st Kentucky Cavalry

If you need any further assistance please email joan.house@ky.gov or call 859-332-8631.