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ADVANCE AND RETREAT. MOMENTUM AND LOSS. HOPE AGAINST THE ODDS.

The outcome of battle is never certain until the smoke clears.

Now, YOU can help propel our **battle** for preservation
closer to victory — and have your gift matched \$19-to-\$1!

Dear Patriotic Friend,

You may have noticed I often sign my letters to you, “*til the battle is won.*”

For me, it’s a commitment that we will be relentless in our pursuit to preserve and protect endangered battlefields, because **we know** once land is dug into or paved over, it is lost forever.

It’s also a reminder of how those brave soldiers would show dogged determination, fighting for their lives in battle. *Few could have known the odds against them, their prospects for victory, nor how the battle might turn. None could be certain of seeing their mother, their sweetheart, or their home ever again ...*

They only knew they were willing to fight, with their last breath and their last drop of blood, ‘til the battle was won!

Right now, we are fighting a battle to save critical land at two Western Theater battlefields and one so far west, it’s in the Trans-Mississippi! They occurred in three different years of the Civil War, and in each we see the unifying theme about the commitment to fight until the bitter end ...

In each of the battles at Wilson’s Creek, Shiloh, and Bentonville, there were powerful shifts in momentum. Early successes by one army gave way to eventual defeats, often following consequential deaths of leading generals. I’ll tell you more about these heroic and tragic stories in a minute, but first let me share the details of this opportunity.

The total purchase price is \$3,216,000 for 141 truly remarkable acres at Wilson’s Creek, Shiloh, and Bentonville. That’s more money than we could hope to raise for this land, but fortunately, generous partners and state and federal grants have brought us close to victory on this deal.

We *only* need to raise the last \$170,500 to secure these acres and save this hallowed ground forever. That means any dollar you contribute is being matched \$19-to-\$1!

May I count on you to make your most generous gift today? What better way is there to start 2026 than with a donation to help preserve these important 141 battlefield acres?

On August 10, 1861, Union Gen. Nathaniel Lyon launched a surprise attack on a larger Confederate force at **Wilson's Creek** in Missouri. It was a bold move that threw the Southern troops into temporary disarray. Lyon positioned much of his outnumbered force on what would become known as Bloody Hill. The hill provided a strong defensive position with commanding views of the battlefield. But after five brutal hours of attacks and fighting, Lyon was killed. He was the first Union general to die in a Civil War battle. With heavy casualties, including their leader, and an exhausted supply of ammunition, Lyon's replacement, Maj. Samuel Sturgis, ordered his men to withdraw from the field.



General
Nathaniel Lyon



Wilson's Creek was the first major Civil War battle fought west of the Mississippi River. © Noel Benadom, American Battlefield Trust



General Albert
Sidney Johnston



A two-acre tract of land at Shiloh that needs saving today is located near land previously preserved by the Trust. © Mike Talplacido, American Battlefield Trust

At **Shiloh**, in April 1862, Confederate forces attacked Union troops near Pittsburg Landing, driving them back in an onslaught that seemed to promise victory. But that early momentum unraveled with the death of Confederate Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston, who was mortally wounded while leading a charge. His loss, and the disarray of fighting the costliest battle of the Civil War up to that time, threw the Confederates into confusion at a crucial moment. The following day, reinforced Union troops under Gen. Ulysses S. Grant turned the tide, reclaiming the lost ground and forcing a Confederate retreat.

At both Shiloh and Wilson's Creek, the chaos of battle was marked by surges of momentum and reversals, which shaped the course of the war in the west.

The two-acre tract we're working to save at Shiloh hosted critical maneuvers during the early action and is located next to land previously preserved by the Trust and the Shiloh National Military Park.

The five acres at Wilson's Creek will be the first private land saved at Bloody Hill. I'm extremely excited about this opportunity. Bloody Hill remains a powerful reminder of the high stakes in those early days of the war, and why preserving this land is so essential to telling the full story of America's fight for its future. Wilson's Creek is located in Greene County, one of the fastest growing counties in Missouri. Just imagine if five more acres of Little Round Top or Snodgrass Hill became available? Bloody Hill is that important to battles and campaigns in the far west. We must not wait! Developers are knocking on the door.

The opportunity to be the first to save private land at Bloody Hill brings me back to 1987(!), when our work in Bentonville began. So little preservation work had been done at Bentonville that it was hard to envision or remember where the battle was. But we set out on our quest to save what we could, with hope in our hearts and a distant vision of what we might achieve.

What we accomplished with your help over the next 40 years is remarkable. Take a look at the 2025 Bentonville map. All the area in light blue is what we have saved thanks to partner organizations, state agencies, and dedicated members like you.

We've been working here nearly 10 times longer than the duration of the Civil War itself! And now we've preserved 2,259 acres. It's a shining example of why we do what we do. And these three key parcels we're trying to save today are central to the battle's action and bring our vision of contiguous and intact battlefield closer to completion. But we must act quickly. The owners have received several offers from developers to build subdivisions, and it's been rumored that a possible dollar discount store is being proposed.

The Battle of Bentonville was the final major battle fought between the armies of Union Gen. William T. Sherman and Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston. It started on March 19, 1865, with a Union advance met by a Confederate trap that drove back Union forces and put Sherman's campaign at risk. But over the course of three days, the momentum shifted back and forth as brutal fighting surged across fields, thickets, and farm roads. The Federals responded with resolve, sending reinforcements and leveraging superior numbers. Each side attacked and counterattacked in a grinding contest that saw gains measured in yards and paid for in blood.

By March 21, Johnston realized he could accomplish nothing by staying at Bentonville. The Confederate general withdrew under cover of darkness, leaving the field, and ultimately the war's conclusion, to Sherman. The Union's victory at Bentonville didn't come from a single glorious charge or moment of valor alone; it came from enduring a grueling trial of will, coordination, and determination. That same tenacity would soon bring the Confederate surrender at Bennett Place just weeks later.

Over the decades, the American Battlefield Trust, with your help, has helped save critical land at Bentonville. Preservation of these tracts would allow for improvement of the already excellent trail system at this battlefield.



General
William T. Sherman



General
Joseph E. Johnston



The Battle of Bentonville was the last full-scale battle in the Western Theater and the largest ever fought in North Carolina.
© Melissa A. Winn, American Battlefield Trust

Just as the battles of Bentonville, Shiloh, and Wilson's Creek turned on sudden shifts in momentum, often with devastating consequences, the fight to preserve our nation's hallowed ground can pivot just as quickly.

Unlike the generals in the war, we're not up against armies, but instead, developers. And if we fail to act in time, the momentum could shift away from preservation and toward irreversible loss. Once a battlefield is paved over or buried beneath warehouses or subdivisions, we can't reclaim it. The story is interrupted, the sacrifice obscured.

That's why we must fight to secure this land.

**Every acre we save is a stand against forgetting.
Every victory in preservation strengthens the next until the last
threatened acre is safe, and the battle is truly won.**

And so, I ask for your help once again. I know there are more battles ahead. But I am *thrilled* to start the year by sharing this truly historic preservation opportunity that is ours for the taking. A total of 141 battlefield acres at Bentonville, Shiloh, and Wilson's Creek, ready to sign on the dotted line (just as soon as we raise the money).

Knowing the urgency of the moment, and seeing the opportunity to have your gift matched \$19-to-\$1, won't you please start the year right by helping to save America's battlefield history? Please give what you can today at battlefields.org/western.



'Til the battle is won,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David N. Duncan".

David N. Duncan
President

P.S. To see that first map of Bentonville from 1987, and then see where we are today, shows what is possible when we work together with relentless passion, purpose, and commitment. Who knows what the maps may look like 10 or 20 years from now? Who knows what your legacy may be, if we can hold the developers at bay? Let's keep fighting together ... *'til the battle is won!*

*Let's keep fighting together
'til the battle is won!*